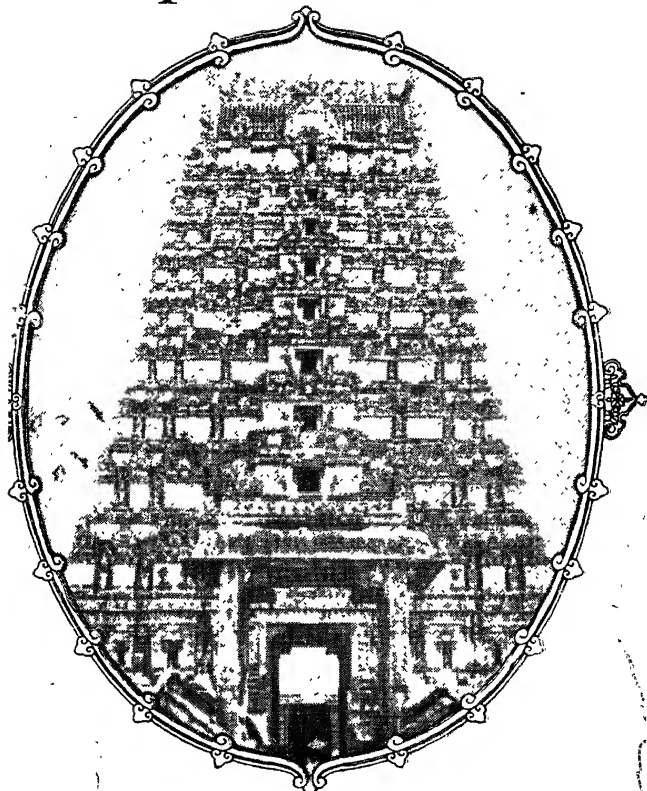


The Glorious Temples of Kanchi



AUTHOR

'Panmozhi Chelvar' T. V. R. CHARI MA

PUBLISHERS

Sri Kanchi Kamakshi Ambal Devasthanam
Sarada Navarathri Kalai Nigazhchigal Trust (Regd.)

15-A KALANDAR STREET KANCHEEPURAM 631502

The Glorious Temples of Kanchi

AUTHOR

'Panmozhi Chelvar' T. V. R. CHARI MA

PROGRAMME EXECUTIVE, ALL INDIA RADIO, COIMBATORE

VICE-PRESIDENT, KAMBAN KAZHAGAM, KANCHI

PUBLISHERS

Sri Kanchi Kamakshi Ambal Devasthanam
Sarada Navarathri Kalai Nigazhchigal Trust (Regd.)

15-A KALANDAR STREET KANCHEEPURAM 631502

First Edition : September 1982

Second Edition : October 1984

Third Edition : October 1987

Price Rs. **10.00**

(Postal Charges Extra)

Printed at



PRINT FOCUS

175-A MEENAKSHI BUILDINGS

DB ROAD RS PURAM COIMBATORE 641002



PRINTED BY
THE GOSWAMI PRESS, BOMBAY

श्री केशी कामेश्वरी देवी
श्री गणेश गणेश गणेश
SREE KAMESHWARI AMBAL

ALL INDIA REGISTRATION
No. 4, BOMBAY
PRINTED BY THE
GOSWAMI PRESS, BOMBAY

नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय । इति श्री केशी कामेश्वरी देवी नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

Sri Chandramouleeswaraya Namaha

Sri Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya Paramparagatha

His Holiness

Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetadhipathi

Jagadguru

Sri Sankaracharya Swamigal

SRIMATAM SAMSTHANAM

Kancheepuram 631502

Date: 22nd September '87

Temples are an essential part of every believer's life and contribute greatly to providing him solace and peace of mind. The 'Murthi' in every temple's sanctum is full of grace and blesses devotees who come for worship. Each temple has a hoary legend associated with it. Kancheepuram, celebrated in history over ages as a jewel among cities, is full of temples.

Sri T.V.R. Chari, Programme Executive of the All India Radio Coimbatore, prepared and had published in Tamil in 1980, a booklet on the many beautiful temples of Kancheepuram ("Kanchiyin Kavinmighu Koilgal") the Telugu version of this booklet in 1981 and English in 1982 and the third edition of the English version during this Navarathri in 1987. It is a matter for satisfaction that these three language versions will be of assistance in acquainting the public about the many temples of Kancheepuram, as well as in securing their co-operation in works connected with the temples.

It is hoped that every believer and bhakta will read the books and be the recipient of the Almighty's beneficence.

NARAYANA SMRITHI

Sivamayam

SRI THEONDAI MANDALADEENAM

Seelathiru Gnanaprakasa

Desika Paramacharya Swamigal Madam

59 Vice-Chairman Paramasivam Street

Big Kancheepuram 631502 Phone 2679

It is a well known fact that Kancheepuram is a very ancient town with innumerable temples. Once this city was the seat of all Indian religions viz, Saivam, Vainavam, Smartham, Jainism & Buddhism. Many scholars both in Tamil and Sanskrit flourished here and some of them even adorned the Nalanda University of North during the period of Harshavarthana.

Of the religions cited above Saivam and Vainavam are still in glory here, Nayanmars and Alvars have sung Hymns in praise of the temples. So it is no wonder that pilgrims from far and near, are attracted to this town throughout the year.

Pilgrims need a clear guide to have Dharshan in these temples. Of course there are Sthalapuramams i.e. Books giving details of these places. But most of

the pilgrims pay a flashing visit as it has become the fashion of the day and as such a booklet furnishing clear details has become inevitable and indispensable. Finding this necessity Sri T. V. R. chari, M. A., a scholar of many languages and Programme Executive of All India Radio, Coimbatore station has brought-out a book to meet the need first in Tamil and then in Telugu, which bear blessings of others and mine.

Since foreigners also often visit this ancient place though not for religious purpose but for Arts and Culture an English Edition has also become necessary. Hence this book is brought out.

I commend this work and bless the author to have the zeal to bring out books of this nature in the time to come as in the past and present.

SIVAM



Publisher's Word

~~For~~ Sri Kanchi Kamakshi Ambal Devasthanam Navarathri Kalai Nigazhchi Trust, Kancheepuram has been formed under the devine orders and with the blessings of His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya of Sri Kanchi with the nett proceeds of the book "Kanchiyin Kovilgal" written by Sri T. V. R. Chari, M.A. and published by Sri Pachaivannar, Pavalavannar Bhakta Jana Sabha in October, 1980. The Trust was inaugurated on Vijaya Dasami Day, the 8th October 1981. The first anniversary of the Trust is now being celebrated on this Vijaya Dasami day, the 27th September 1982.

We are happy to bring out on this occasion, the third edition of the Book entitled "The Glorious Temples of Kanchi" written by the Hon. Adviser of our Trust, Sri T. V. R. Chari, M.A. The nett proceeds from these books will be utilised for Temple purposes.

We thank all noble hearted philanthropists and friends who have helped in the formation of the Trust and in bringing out the books by way of advertisements and donations.

On this sacred occasion we offer our prayers and pranams at the Lotus feet of His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya Swamigal of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam for showering Blessings on us.

Our thanks are due to M/s. Print Focus, Coimbatore for bringing out this book in a beautiful get up in time, Our thanks are due to Sri M. S. Ramaswami. Sree Karyam of Sri Kama Koti Peetam and Sri Kanchi Kamakshi Temple and to Sri A. Srinivasan, Asst. Commissioner/Executive Officer of Sri Kamakshi Ambal Temple, Kancheepuram for their guidance and Co-operation. Our thanks are also due to the Archakas Manager and temple Staff of Sri Kanchi Kamakshi Ambal Devasthanam for their co-operation.

We express our heart felt thanks to Sri D. V. D. M. Sankar Sah, B.A., A.C.A., Chartered Accountant, Kancheepuram who has kindly accepted to be our honorary auditor.

Our thanks are due to all the members of the Trust for their kind co-operation. We express our thanks to the generous public for making the function a grand success and request them for their continued co-operation in our services for the divine cause.

We offer our humble prayers at the Lotus feet of Goddess Sri Kamakshi and His Holiness to shower Their Grace on all of us for Peace and Prosperity.



author's word

The Almighty, out of the abundance of His kindness, manifests on the earth to protect the pious and to put an end to the danger from the evil-minded and establish Dharma. These incarnations of God are described as Avatharas. To be able to get His Grace and cherish their desires, people worship God in the forms appealing to their heart and Temples are thus created as places of worship. Kancheepuram is one of the ancient, lovely and sacred cities of South India known for its temples. By the grace of God, I was fortunate to get the divine orders of His Holiness Jagad Guru Sri Sankaracharya Swamigal of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam to compile the puranic details of the temples in Kancheepuram and bring it out in a book form. With the blessings of His Holiness, the book in Tamil on the temples of Kanchi was published in 1980 under the title Kanchiyin Kavinmigu Koilgal.

The Telugu edition was also published in October 1981 and this English version was brought out in September 1982. Now with the blessings of His Holiness the third edition of this book is being brought out this year for release on the Vijaya Dasami Day the 4th October 1987 at Sri Kamakshi Ambal Temple, Kancheepuram.

On this sacred occasion, I offer my prayerful Pranamams at the Lotus feet of His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya Swamigal of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam for Showering Their Blessings on me. I offer my humble. Pranamams at the Lotus feet of His Holiness Sri Santhananda Swamigal of Sri Bhuvaneswari Adhistanam, Pudukkottai, His Holiness Sri Ahobila Matam Jeeyar Swamigal, His Holiness Jeeyar Swamigal of Tirukovilur His Holiness Sriman Narayana Jeeyar Swamigal His Holiness Sri Jeeyar Swamigal of Sriperumbudur, Srilasri Gurumahasannidhanam of Dharumai Adheenam, Srilasri Gnana Prakasa Desika Paramacharya Swamigal of Thondaimandala Adheenam, Kancheepuram for their kind Blessings.

My heart felt thanks are due to Sri G. Srinivasan, Managing Trustee and other Trustees of Sri Kanchi Kamakshi Ambal Devasthanam Sarada Navarathri Kalai Nigazhchigal Trust for kindly publishing the books.

I express my heartfelt thanks to Prof. V. Natarajan, M.A., of the English Department, National College, Tiruchi for extending his help in scrutinising the manuscripts and to M/s. Print Focus, Coimbatore for printing the book with a good get up.

I am grateful to one and all who have extended their help in all ways in my humble endeavour. My heartfelt thanks are due to all elders and friends for their love and kind participation in the function and showering their esteemed good wishes on me.

I pray the readers with folded hands to kindly go through the book and pardon me as their child for any mistakes, taking only the good out of it. I remain ever grateful for their kindness.

Thirumalai Vijayaraghavachari
(T. V. R. Chari)

THE GLORIOUS TEMPLES OF KANCHI

DESCRIPTION OF THE CITY

am, popularly known as Kanchi is one of the ancient cities of South India. This historic city is famous for its lovely temples and prominent for its silk industry. It is one of the important pilgrim centers in the Thondainadu region of Tamilnadu located 65 Kms. southwest of Madras. It is considered to be one of the seven Mukthi Kshethras, the sacred places of worship where the devotees are believed to attain salvation. Poet Kalidasa's words 'Nagareshu Kanchi' and the saying 'Mukthi Tharum Nagaramezhul Mukkiyamam Kanchi' of the great Vaishnavite Acharya 'Swami Nigamantha Maha Desika' are said in praise of this sacred city. It is described in the puranas as Sathyavratha Kshethra, meaning a holy centre, the residents of which had built up a high reputation for speaking the truth, as Sathyavachana, speaking truth alone was their varatha or walk of life. It is said that all austerities performed in this city will bear fruits in plenty. A number of religions

flourished here at different times. The large number of temples here stand to show that Saivism and Vaishnavism hold their sway in this sacred city.

The city Kanchi is divided into two parts viz. 'Vishnu Kanchi' or 'Little Kanchi' and 'Siva Kanchi' or 'Big Kanchi'. That part of the town situated on the left of the central bus stand of Kancheepuram is called 'Vishnu Kanchi' while that on the right is called 'Siva Kanchi'. The temples of Lord Varadaraja, Yadokthakari, Deepaparakasar and Ashtabuja Perumal embellish 'Vishnu Kanchi' while the shrines of Sri Vaikunta Perumal, Sri Ulagalantha Perumal, Sri Ekamreswarar, Sri Kachapeswarar, Sri Kailasanathar, Goddess Sri Kamakshi, Sri Kumarakottam and Sri Sankara Mutt of Sri Kanchi Kamakotipeetam adorn the 'Siva Kanchi'. It is said that 108 sanctums of Lord Siva and 18 sanctums of Lord Vishnu are situated in this holy city. The sky scraping towers and huge walled enclosures of the temples on all sides of the city attract pilgrims and immerse them in a sense of deep devotion. Words are not adequate to describe the artistic beauty of the sculptures on the towers and the pillars of the mandapas in the temples, standing in proof of the high level of advancement of this art in ancient times. Thus, the city of Kanchi is a big treasure of art and architecture and is therefore fittingly called 'The city of Temples'.

PURANIC ORIGIN :

Kanchi is described as the naval of our motherland 'Bharath' and the girdle of Mother Goddess Parasakthi manifesting in the mono-syllable absolute designate "Om". It is said that Lord Brahma worshipped Goddess Parasakthi who adorns Sri Kamakoti Peetam here. Again, it was here that Lord Vishnu emerged in a resplendent form with four arms bedecked with the celestial conch, wheel, cub and Abhaya hastha from the ritual fire of Lord Brahma. The city of Kanchi is so called because Brahma performed worship here, — The word 'Ka' denotes 'Brahma' and 'Anchi' denotes worship. It is here Brahma worshipped Lord Varadharaja and Goddess Sri Kamakshi.

The five primordial substances, Earth (Prithivi), Water (Aapaha), Light-fire (Thejas), Air (Vayu) and Space (Aakasa) form part of the creations and the existence of these five components is exhibited in everycreation of this universe. They are called the 'Panchabhootas' and reflect the truth that God is omniscient.

Each of these panchabhoothas is associated with one among the five sacred places in our holy country, called Panchabhoothasthalas, of which Kanchi is one and is associated with Prithivi, the earth. Lord Siva manifests Himself here in the form of Prithivilinga and is worshipped as Sri Ekamreswara. Similarly, among the shrines where Sakthi is worshipped as 'Jagathkarani' Goddess Parasakthi is worshipped at Kanchi as Kamakshi who is associated with space or Akasa. Here the Goddess is said to have manifested Herself in the form of cosmic space glorified as Bilakasa. It is here that Lord Vishnu gave dharshan in the form of an Archamoorthi and is worshipped as 'Varadaraja' fulfilling the ambitions of the devotees.

Lord Ekamreswara, Goddess Kamakshi and Lord Varadaraja are said to sanctify the shrines dwelling under Rudrakoti, Kamakoti and Punyakoti Vimanas respectively. Another famous temple in this sacred city is "Kumarakottam" the shrine of Sivakumara "Sri Subrahmanya". It is with the grace of this Lord Sri Kumaraswami that Sri Kachchiappa Sivacharya, the priest of this temple wrote the famous work in Tamil 'Kandapurana', which narrates the story and glory of the Sivakumara.

The glory of the temples of Kanchi was sung by Nayanmars, Alwars, Acharyas, Saints and spiritual guides. It is here that Sri Adi Sankara installed "Srichakra" in the shrine of "Sri Kamakshi" and instituted "Sri Kamakotipeetam". Besides, Kanchi was one of the famous seats of learning in ancient India. The importance of Kanchi was also described by the famous, Chinese pilgrim "Hieun—Chuwang".

KANCHI-A MUKTHI KSHETRA :

Temples are the sacred spots where we have the privilege of worshipping the Almighty in a form appealing to our thought and heart. The omniscient and omnipotent God descends on to the earth to uphold 'Dharma' and to protect the virtuous from the wicked whenever exigencies arise. It is described as Avathar or incarnation. In these incarnations, the Lord performs many a miracle to manifest His greatness and to establish faith in the hearts of His devotees. Our ancestors have constructed temples to commemorate these incarnations and also to perpetuate the faith in God. The Deity is installed in the temple to enable devotees to think of the greatness of God with undaunted faith that the deity installed there sanctifies the place to shower blessings on the devotees for all times to come. These temples are the sacred spots of worship by means of which our thoughts are purified. Purification of thought is the sure way to get rid of our sins, egoism, and worldly worries. Purity of thought is the path for peace and worship ensures purity of thought. Prayer protects us from falling a prey to the impulses of 'Maya' and makes us worthy of seeking liberation. Our ancestors, have, therefore laid stress on the importance of temple worship as a means of mental peace. It is no exaggeration to say that the pilgrims who visit Kanchi will carry the impression that those who have a glimpse of the glorious temples of Kanchi and offer prayers in this Mukthi Kshethra are indeed the blessed and are well on their way to reach the goal of life.





SHOWERS OF GOLD IN KANCHI

KANCHI: A THEATRE FOR GOD'S MIRACLES:

Kanchipuram is a granary of art and architecture. It is also the birth place of many saints and scholars. Sri Poigai Alwar, first among the Alwars was born in this sacred city. Nayanmars like Sakkiya Nayanar, Thirukurippu Thonda Nayanar, Iyadigal Kadavarkon lived in this city and attained salvation. The association of renowned religious teachers like Sri Adi Sankara, Sri Mooka Sankara and Sri Ramanuja and eminent Acharyas like Sri Nigamantha Maha Desigar and Sri Manavalamamuni adds to the greatness of this holy city. Great devotees like Thirukachinambi and Thirukachchiappa Sivacharya who are distinguished as the recipients of God's grace and the learned scholar Sri Parimelazhagar, reputed for his commentary on 'Thirukkural' dwelled in this city. In deference to the Prayers of these noble souls affluent in God's grace, the Almighty chose to perform many

miracles in this holy city of Kanchi. Kanchi is, therefore, described as a theatre for God's miracles.

SHOWERS OF GOLD :

The occurrence of showers of gold in Kanchi on two occasions is noteworthy among such miracles of the Divine. On one occasion, there were showers of gold by the grace of Goddess Sri Kamakshi and on another occasion by the grace of Sri Perumdevi, the consort of Lord Varadharaja. These incidents are Proof-Positive of God's concern for substantiating the efficacy of the devotees' prayers and also the boundless compassion of the Lord.

When Akasabhoopathi ruled over Kanchi, there was drought and famine. He was also longing to have a child who could be the heir to the Kingdom. So the King undertook a Vratha praying to Goddess Kamakshi to cause rains and also to bless him with a child. By the grace of Goddess Sri Kamakshi, Akasabhoopathi was blessed with a son. The King wanted to share his joy with his subjects and arranged for mass-feeding. Goddess Kamakshi came to the pandal in the guise of a maiden and sat in the row meant for ladies. As she started consuming food, there were showers outside the pandal and when the King and his subjects came out to see the welcome showers they witnessed showers of gold. When they were wondering at it, they were further amazed to hear the child Thuudeeran, son of King Akasabhoopathi coming out with an explanation that while the Queen was winnowing the grains for the mass feeding, a grain of gold fell from her ring and got mixed up with the food grains and it so happened that the golden grain got mingled with the food consumed by Goddess Sri Kamakshi as she ate the food in the guise of a Sumangali. As a result, there were showers of gold in Kanchi by the grace of the Goddess Sri Kamakshi.

Sri Nigamantha Maha Desigar was one of the eminent vaishnavite Acharyas noted for his scholarship and simplicity. He was born in a place called Thooppul near Kanchipuram. He

was an ardent devotee of Lord Varadharaja. He was very much popular and as familiarity breeds contempt, some of his contemporaries who were jealous of his eminence and popularity plotted to put him to insult. They chose a very poor lad who was a simpleton and sent him to Swami Desigar for help. Tutored by the mischief-mongers the lad approached the pious but poor Acharya for financial assistance to meet his marriage expenses. Sri Desigar didn't have any money to help the lad. At the same time he did not want to send the lad disappointed. So he invoked the blessings of Goddess Perumdevi, the consort of Sri Varadharaja to fulfill the lad's desire. Mother Goddess Sri Perumdevi who is Mahalakshmi, the Goddess of riches was very much pleased with the selfless prayers of Sri Desigar and in response to his prayers, emerged an intense downpour of gold coins much to the chagrin of the rivals of Sri Desigar and the delight of the lad and Sri Desigar. The Compositions then rendered by Sri Desigar in Praise of Sri Mahalakshmi showering the grace on devotees as Sri Perumdevi of Kanchi came to be called as "SRISTHUTHI".

The showers of gold in Kanchi are only some of the innumerable miracles that occurred by the grace of God and are examples to show the world that God is omnipotent and that surrender unto him is the sure path for peace and prosperity.






SRI PERUMDEVI THAYAR WITH VARADHARAJA PERUMAL

THE SACRED SHRINE OF SRI VARADHARAJA

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION :

 The sacred shrine of Sri Varadharaja is in the eastern end of Kancheepuram. Sri Varadharaja's temple is considered to be the third important sacred place of the 108 Sri Vaishnavite Divyadesams eulogised by the Vaishnavite Saints known as Alwars. It is one of the important temples located in the Little Kancheepuram attracting thousands of pilgrims everyday. The tall towers and majestic walled enclosures of this temple catch the eye of the pilgrims even from a distance. Lord Vishnu sanctifies this place under the Punyakoti Vimana on the sacred hillock called Hasthigiri. The word 'Hasti' in Sankskrit means an elephant and giri means hillock. Hasthigiri is an hillock in the shape of an elephant. It is said in the puranas that Devendra did penance here and got restored to his original form from that of an elephant, caused by the curse of Goddess Saraswathi. Lord Vishnu who is worshipped here is referred to as Hasthigirinatha or Athiooran meaning the Lord of Hasthigiri. He is also called Devaraja or Devadiraja meaning the Lord of Devas and the

master of the Chief of the Devas. Great Vaishnavite Acharyas have sung in His praise as Perarulalan-the Most merciful, Pranatharthi-haran-the saviour of the distressed, and Varadharaja-the munificent bestower of boons on the devotees.

PURANIC ORIGIN :

Lord Brahma once desired to have the darshan of the omniscient Sri Vishnu in the shape of an Archavathara moorthi i.e., in the magnificent figure with chathurbhuj four arms bedecked with the celestial conch, chakra, crub and Abhayahastha. Brahma performed penance to get his desire fulfilled. As a result, Sriman Narayana appeared before Brahma in theertha roopa, i.e., in the form of sacred water. That holy place is worshipped even today as pushkaram. This did not satisfy Brahma who wanted to worship Vishnu in His Superhuman form. So he performed penance once again. This time, Lord Vishnu appeared in the form of a forest symbolising the Earth. This place has later been worshiped as 'Naimisaranya'. When Brahma wanted to continue his penance to accomplish his desire he heard the words from the atmosphere asking him to perform one hundred Aswamedha-yagas for the fulfillment of his desire. Considering the time involved in performing so many yagas Brahma prayed to the Lord to show kindness and give darshan quickly. Lord Vishnu took pity on Brahma and told him that performing one yagna in Kanchi, the Sathyavratashethra would fetch the fruits equal to one hundred yagnas as the austerities performed in this sacred city are many times more efficacious.

In pursuance of this divine suggestion, Brahma performed the Aswamedha yaga on the Hasthigiri. During this sacrifice, Lord Vishnu emerged from the sacrificial fire and gave darshan as an Archavatharamoorthi to the desire of Brahma. The Lord is therefore called 'Hasthigirinatha'. The burn-marks caused by the flames could be seen even to-day in the refulgent face of the Utsavamoorthy, the processional deity.

PERUMDEVI-THE CONSORT OF SRI VARADHARAJA :

The consort of Lord Varadharaja, Goddess Perumdevi is the incarnation of Mahalakshmi. The Utsavamoorthi of this Mother

Goddess is never taken in procession through the streets, it being the hallmark of a chaste woman par excellence. There is a sacred tank called 'Ananthasaras' within the temple prakara itself and a float festival is celebrated when Goddess Perumdevi also adorns the float, and is therefore, called 'Mother Perumdevi's Float Festival' Goddess Perumdevi is famous for the abundance of Her kindness and for Her grace in bestowing boons on the devotees.

THE ILLUSTRIOUS RECIPIENTS OF THE LORD'S GRACE :

A number of devotees worshipped Lord Varadharaja and Sri Perumdevi and have become illustrious by their deep devotion and by receiving the grace of Sri Varadharaja and Sri Perumdevi. One among them is Sri Thirukachchinambigal who was born in Poovirundhavalli near Kancheepuram situated on the Madras - Kancheepuram trunk road. He has dedicated his life to the service of Lord Varadharaja. He grew a flower garden in Poovirundhavalli meant for pushpa kainkarya to Sri Varadharaja of Kanchi. He used to collect flowers from the garden everyday, make garlands and used to tread the entire distance upto Kancheepuram and offer the garlands to Lord Sri Varadharaja. As he grew in age, Sri Thirukachchinambi stayed in Kancheepuram and used to fan the Lord to provide soothing cool breeze Sri Thirukachchinambi was seen always carrying a fan in his hand and spent his time in fanning the Lord. As Sri Nambi dedicated himself in the Aalavatta kainkarya i. e., Service of fanning-he came to be known as Thiru Aalavatta Thirukachchinambi. Shri Thirukachchi was blessed with the rare privilege of conversing with Lord Sri Varadharaja while performing the service of the Lord.

Srimad Ramanuja had his tutorage under Sri Yadavaprakasa in Kancheepuram in his younger days. In those days Sri Ramanuja used to give interpretations to Upanishads quite different from that of Sri Yadavaprakasa. This annoyed the master and he started disliking Sri Ramanuja. This dislike developed into a sort of hatred towards Sri Ramanuja. Sri Yadavaprakasa plotted to put an end to the life of Sri Ramanuja,

hit upon a plan of undertaking a pilgrimage to Benaras and exterminating Sri Ramanuja on the way.

The most merciful Lord Sri Varadharaja took compassion on Sri Ramanuja and helped him out by revealing to him the plot through another student studying along with Sri Ramanuja in the camp of Sri Yadavaprakasa. Sri Ramanuja escaped into a forest when Sri Varadharaja appeared before Sri Ramanuja in the guise of a hunter and escorted him to Kancheepuram. Spellbound by the kindness of Sri Varadharaja and His consort, Sri Ramanuja wanted to dedicate himself to the service of the Lord. On the advice of Sri Thirukachchinambigal, Sri Ramanuja took up 'Theerthakainkaryam', the service of offering holy waters for the Lord's ablution.

Thereafter Sri Ramanuja went to Srirangam with the ambition of becoming a disciple of Sri Alavandar the great Vaishnavite Acharya but could not.

When Sri Ramanuja reached Srirangam, Sri Alavandar had shed his mortal coils. After returning to Kanchi, Sri Ramanuja formed certain opinions and had certain ideas according to which he wanted to chart out his future plans. But he wanted to check up the validity of his thoughts and requested Sri Thirukachchi Nambigal to verify the same with Lord Sri Varadharaja Himself. In response to Thirukachchi Nambigal's prayers, Lord Sri Varadharaja Himself came out with a revelation in six sayings to sustain and strengthen Vaishnavism.

The famous six sayings disclose the Supremacy of Sriman Narayana and dispell the wrong notion that consciousness is necessary at the fag end of human life and categorically emphasise the Truth that Liberation of the soul after death is a certainty. Thanks to Sri Thirukachchi Nambigal and Sri Ramanuja, the whole of humanity came to know Lord Sri Varadharaja's divine message.

Another greate devote was Shri Doddachariar who lived in Ghatikachalam also known as Sholanghir. He was a regular

visitor to the Brahmotsavam of Sri Varadharaja. Once, he could not come to Kanchi due to old age. He was feeling for his inability to go all the way to Kancheepuram to have the darshan of Sri Varadharaja's Gurudaseva. Standing on the banks of Thakkankulam, a tank in Sholanghir, just before dawn on that auspicious day — the fullmoon day of the month of Vaishak, Shri Doddachariar prayed to Lord Varadharaja with a heavy heart for the darshan of Garudaseva. Sensing the mental disposition of Sri Doddachariar, the most merciful Lord made the priests hold the milkly-white umbrellas in a slanting position for a while to give darshan to Sri Doddachariar who was standing on the Thakkankulam. Thus, the greatness of the devotee Sri Doddachariar was made known to the world. Even now, during Brahmotsavam the custom of holding the umbrella in a slanting position just near the entrance to the tower of the temple is followed to commemorate this soul stirring incident.

Once, when Robert Clive visited Kanchi, he had an opportunity to witness the Garudaseva of Sri Varadharaja. As was so overwhelmed on seeing the Lord on Garudavahana, that he took the necklace of his spouse and presented it to the Lord as an offering to adorn the deity. It is a custom to this day that this necklace presented by Robert Clive popularly known as 'Clive Maharakandi' is used to decorate Sri Varadharaja only on the Garudotsavam day during the Brahmotsavam.

OTHER SANNIDHIS IN THE TEMPLE :

The sanctum of Sri Varadharaja is on the sacred Hill 'Hasthigiri'. There is a cave temple in the Hasthigiri, just at the feet of the hillock, sanctified by Sri Guhanarashimhar or Azhagiasingar. Pilgrims have the darshan of Sri Azhagiasingar before going to have the darshan of Sri Varadharaja on the Hasthigiri. It was by the grace of this deity Sri Guhanarasimha, that Devendra got released from the curse of Goddess Saraswathi and at that time, there were two lizards as witnesses. These two lizards also later got released from their curse by the grace of Sri Varadharaja. Later, Devendra made a gold lizard and silver

lizard and consecrated them in the inner Prakara of Lord Varadharaja's sanctum. It is said that the evil effects caused by the falling of lizards on human beings do not affect those who dwell in Kancheepuram and those who have a dharshan of the two lizards installed in the temple of Sri Varadharaja.

SOME SALIENT FEATURES OF THE TEMPLE :

The sanctum of Sri Varadharaja is situated within five Prakaras. On entering the Rajagopuram, the tower at the entrance of the temple, there is a tank on the north side called Anandasaras Pushkarani. There is a hundred pillar mantapam on the bank of this tank. The mandapam is full of sculptures exhibiting excellent workmanship in architecture. Around the tank, there are the sanctums of Sri Ranganatha, Sri Rama and Sri Chakrathazhwar and in the Prakara there are the sanctums of Sri Nammazhwar, Sri Madhurakavi, Sri Nadamuni, Sriman Manavalamaamungal, and Srimad Ramanuja. Then follows the sannidhi of Sri Tathachariar, a great devotee of the Lord at the Vahanamandapam.

In the second Prakara, called Sri Alavandar Prakara, we find the sannidhis of Thiruvananthazhwar and Sri Kariamanicka Varadar. While coming round the third Prakara, we come across the sannidhis of Sri Andal, Sri Rama, Vishvaksena, Malayala Nachiyar, Mother Goddess Sri Perumdevi, Sri Guhanarasimha, Sri Dhanvanthari and Valampuri Vinayaka. After climbing the twenty four steps we reach Hasthigiri, the sacred hillock on which Lord Sri Varadharaja is in a standing posture under the Punyakoti Vimana.

Under the divine orders of Brahma, Viswakarma, the Chief Architect of the Devas made a wooden idol of Lord Vardaharaja which was consecrated by Brahma as the presiding Deity where as the one that emerged from Brahma's sacrificial altar is worshipped as the processional deity. The wooden idol which was consecrated by Brahma as Moolavar in the beginning as 'Adi Hasthigirinathar' was later immersed in the Anandasaras

Pushkarani and a granite idol was installed in its place. The original wooden idol was taken out of the sacred tank once in every sixty years in earlier days and once in forty years at present, to enable the devotees to have darshan atleast once in their life time. The wooden idol is kept in the Vasantha Mandapam for one mandalam-i. e. for a period of 45 to 48 days for Public darshan and then again placed under the sacred water of Anandasaras tank. Such a rare festival was celebrated recently in 1979.

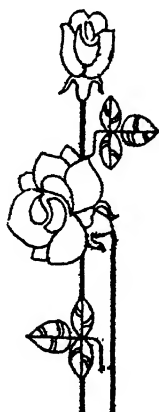
It was Lord Brahma who for the first time celebrated a festival in this temple by taking the processional deity decorated splendidly with precious ornaments into the city so that the devotees get a golden opportunity to have the darshan of the Lord on various vahanas. Hence this festival came to be known as Brahmotsavam. The Brahmotsavam of Lord Varadaraja is celebrated in Tamil month of Vaikasi or Vaisakh, with theerthavari on Thiruvonam the day on which the star Sravanam occurs. The most famous Garudotsavam is celebrated very grandly in the morning of the third day, full moon day, usually coinciding with the asterism Visaka, the birth star of Sri Nammazhvar. Nammazhvar satumurai is celebrated on this day on a very grand scale.

Garudotsavam is celebrated in this temple three times a year. The first one is during the Brahmotsavam. The second one is celebrated in the month of Ani on the day with the asterism 'Swathi' the birth star of ~~par~~^{per}iazhvar. The third one known as the Gajendramoksha Garudaseva is celebrated on the fullmoon day of the month Adi. The car festival of Sri Varadaraja is also very famous and at times it takes more than a day for the sacred car to come back to its normal place.


This temple was developed by a number of Pallava and Chola Kings and the rulers of Vijayanagara empire and Raja Thodarmal. Thereafter, a number of devotees have rendered several Kainkaryas to the temple of Lord Sri Varadaraja. This

temple is now maintained by the department for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (H. R. & C. E.) of the Government of Tamilnadu.

Pilgrims from all parts of the country come to Kancheepuram everyday, visit this ancient temple of Sri Varadaraja and worship the Lord to get their desires cherished. Blessed are those who visit this temple and worship Sri Varadaraja as they are bestowed with peace and prosperity by the grace of Lord S: and Goddess Sri Perumdevi.



The Temple of Sri Yadokthakari

 The temple of Sri Yadokthakari is situated one kilometre to the west of Sri Varadaraja's temple in the little Kancheepuram. It is one of the famous 108 Srivaishnavite Divyasthanas. Sri Poigai Azhwar, Sri Peyazhwar, Sri Tirumazhisai Azhwar, Sri Nammazhwar and Sri Tirumangai Azhwar have sung in praise of this Lord Sri Yadokthakari.

Lord Vishnu had to take a number of forms to save Brahma's yagna from impediments. Sri Deepaprakasara, Sri Velukkainathar, Sri Ashtabhujar and Sri Yadokthakari are the karanaroopas of Lord Vishnu in his efforts to avert interruption to Brahma's yagna and are connected with the emergence of Sri Varadaraja in Kanchi from the sacrificial fire of Brahma.

Once there ensued a dispute between Goddess Saraswathi and Goddess Lakshmi about the relative merits of the two.

Unable to settle the issue themselves, they approached Indra, the Chief of Devas for opinion which was in favour of Lakshmi the Goddess of richness, Saraswathi got angry at this and cursed Indra. Then, they went to Brahma seeking his help in the settlement of their dispute. As Brahma's verdict also was in favour of Lakshmi, Saraswathi got annoyed and in anger decided to be away from the company of Brahma and remain in seclusion. It is at that time, Brahma desired to have the Sakshathkara of Lord Vishnu and for the fulfilment of his desire wanted to perform Aswamedhayaga in Kancheepuram and as Saraswathi went away in anger he had to perform the sacrifice without his consort.

This added fuel to the fire and Saraswathi got furious and was bent upon causing impediments to Brahmas' sacrifice. She created fire by her supernatural power and directed the flames towards the sacrificial site. Brimming with compassion at the devotion of Brahma, Lord Vishnu appeared on the spot and intercepted the fire and held it out as a lamp and averted the destruction of the sacrificial site. So he came to be called as "Deepaprakasa".

The temple of Deepaprakasa is situated about half a kilometre to the west of the temple of Sri Yadokthakari Deepaprakasa is in a standing posture under Srikaravimana facing the west. Nammazhwar and Thirumangaiazhwar have sung in Praise of Sri Deepaprakasar. In the vicinity of the temple of Sri Deepaprakasa is the sannidhi of the great Vaishnavite Acharya, Sri Nigamantha Mahadesika. Once there was a dense growth of grass in this place and so it came to be called Thooppul. This place is also sacred as being the birth place of Sri Desikar.

There is another divyasthala called Velukkai near the temple of Sri Deepaprakasar. This is the shrine of Lord Vishnu with the name "Mukundanayaka". Though it is said in puranas that Lord Mukundanayaka appeared in a standing posture to Saint Brugu, the Presiding deity in this temple now is in the

form of Sri Narasimha. It is said that this Narahari nullified the evil effects of Kapalika employed by Saraswathi to destroy the sacrifice of Brahma. Peyazhwar and Thirumangaiazhwar have sung in praise of this 'Narahari' or Azhagiyasingar.

Un successful in her attempts to cause obstruction to Brahma's sacrifice of Brahma's sacrifice, Saraswathi, Herself took the form of a river and rushed towards the sacrificial site with the intention of washing away the arrangements for the sacrifice. To make Saraswathi realise her folly and to make the world know that there cannot be harmony in life without the co-operation of the wife, and also to reinforce faith in Dharma that when a devotee completely surrenders unto God, the Almighty takes care of the devotee's welfare, Lord Vishnu again baffled Saraswathi's plans. He lay down on His serpent couch reposing His head on His right hand across the path of the gushing stream Saraswathi's bashfulness, the characteristic of a chaste woman, did not embolden her to go beyond the reposing Lord. Repenting for her deeds, she gave up her plans and decided to enter a fissure on earth and proceed as an underground stream and reach the other end of the sacrificial site only to join Brahma in compromise Lord Vishnu in the lying posture come to called be Bhujagasayana, thenceforth, meaning the Lord reposing on the serpent couch.

BHUJAGASAYANA TAKES THE TITLE OF YADOKTHAKARI :

Once sage Bhargava performed penance in Thirumazhisai known as Maheesarakshethra. This sacred place is near Madras on the Madras-Kanchipuram Trunk road and is near Poovirundavalli. He got a male child through Kanakangi, a celestial damsel. The child was not fully developed when it was born and so Kanakangi left the child in a cane bush and went back to her abode. The child, incarnate of 'Sri Sudarsanachakra, the celestial wheel, of Lord Vishnu was lying in the cane bush' when Lord Jagannatha and his consort Lakshmi sanctifying the temple in Tirumazhisai, appeared and showered Their Grace on

the child. At the merciful glance of the Lord, the deformed body became whole and the child endowed with a captivating personality began to cry.

Thiruvalaan, a resident of a nearby village who chanced to pass by the bush, saw the crying child, and brought it home. Considering it as a boon granted by the Lord to them, he and his wife brought up the child with all affection naming it as 'Sivavakyar'. The foster-parents and the neighbours were astonished to notice that the child was devoid of the symptoms of hunger and thirst. It did not show any interest whatsoever even in the breast feeding. Yet the child was having its normal growth. At that time, there lived another couple in the neighbouring village who were also longing for progeny. Receiving reports about the divine child, they came to see the child. According to tradition, one should not go with empty hands while visiting children, temples, divine personalities and gurus. Accordingly they brought a jar full of cow's milk in a spirit of devotion. To the surprise of all, the divine child accepted the offering and drank a portion of the milk. The couple considered themselves very much fortunate and consumed the remnants of the offering. The woman became pregnant and gave birth to a male child. They named the child as Kanikannan, who later became the disciple of Sivavakyar.

As Sivavakyar, the son of Bhargava grew in age, he undertook an intensive study of a number of religions but could not decide on the choice of the religion to be adapted by him. At that stage, Sivavakyar chanced to meet Sri Peyazhwar and a debate on religion ensued between them. Sivavakyar tasted defeat at the hands of Peyazhwar and thus became his disciple embracing Vaishnavism and became a devout vaishnavite. Lord Siva appeared before Sivavakyar and put him to test. In appreciation of his meditation on Lord Vishnu in a yogic posture Lord Parameswara conferred the title of Bakthisarar on Sivavakyar, who also came to be known as Thirumazhisai Alwar.

Bakthisarar paid a visit to Mayurapuri, known as Mylapore now, which was the birth place of his spiritual mentor Peyazhwar. He stayed at Mylapore for some time and returned to Thirumazhisai before he was very much depressed, as he could not find the casket containing the sacred sand 'Thiruman' in its usual place to adorn his forehead. That night, Sri Venkateswara, the Lord of Seven Hills appeared in his dream and suggested to him to search for his Thiruman Casket in the tank of temple of Sri Bhujagasayanar in Kancheepuram.

Bakthisarar praised Lord Srinivasa for the abundance of his kindness, and came to Kancpeepuram. His joy knew no bounds when he located his Thiruman casket in the sacred tank, in the precincts of the temple of Lord Bhujagasayana, which also happened to be the birth place of Poigai Azhwar. Bakthisarar stayed at Kanchi and began to spend his time in doing service to Lord Bhujagasayana.

Having come to know the glory of Bakthisarar, Kanikannan came to Kanchipuram, became his disciple and assisted him in the worship of Lord Bhujagasayana. At that time, an old crippled lady used to clean the temple premises every day.

Bakthisarar was pleased with her services to the Lord and made her an exquisitely beautiful lady with his divine powers.

Pallavaraya, who ruled Kanchi at that time, married the lady having been captivated by her beauty. As time passed, the king grew old while the beauty of the lady did not diminish, by the grace of Bakthisara. The old king met Kanikannan during one of his daily visits to the palace for collecting food grains as Biksha. The king requested Kanikannan to bring his spiritual teacher, Bakthisarar to his palace since he also desired to regain his youth by the grace of Bakthisara.

Kanikannan expressed his inability to comply with the request of the king to bring his teacher to the palace since

Bakthisara never stirred out of his abode to visit anybody. The disappointed king then exhorted Kanikannan, a ballad composer of rare merit, to sing in Praise of him. Kanikannan did not yield even to this request of the king. He not only refused to comply with the request of the king but also stated that he would not extoll mortals. However, he sang in praise of the deities sanctifying the city of Kanchi to show his mettle. Bubbling with anger, the king banished Kanikannan from the city of Kanchipuram as a punishment.

Kanikannan returned to the temple and reported the matter to his teacher Bakthisara and prayed for his blessings, before leaving Kancheepuram to carry out the King's orders.

Bakthisara was very much distressed at the harsh treatment meted out to a devotee by the king and felt that he should not also stay at a place where the devotees could not get proper treatment. So he himself decided to leave Kanchi along with Kanikannan. Fully aware of the Truth that God forgives readily those offending Him but not those offending His true devotees. Bakthisara appealed to Lord Bhujagasayana in a soul stirring verse to follow them and the Lord did so.

After the departure of the true devotees from Kanchi, and at the disappearance of the Lord Bhujagasayana from the temple, the whole city of Kanchi was enveloped by dense darkness. It was then that the king realised his utter folly and rushed with his subjects to pray to Bakthisara and Kanikannan to return to Kanchi, forgiving his mistake. The anger of great people is always short-lived and out of his natural quality of compassion, Bakthisara accepted the prayers of the king and agreed to return to Kanchi with Kanikannan and in turn prayed again to the Lord Bhujagasayana to return to kanchi with them and sanctify Thiruvekka as before. Again the Lord obliged.

However, on return, Lord Bhujagasayana lay down on His serpent couch reposing His head this time on His left hand instead of His original posture of reposing His head on the


right hand. He did so only to make the world know by this difference in His posture how faithfully He carried out the wishes of Bakthisara, the sincere devotee. Thenceforth, Lord Bhujagasayana of Tiruvekka in Kanchi came to be called as "Lord Yadokthakari" or 'Sonnnavannam Seida perumal' meaning the Lord who acted according to the wishes of His devotee. The sacred spot where the Lord spent one night in their company is called "Orirukkai". Poigiazhwar, Peyazhwar, Thirumazhisai Azhwar and Nammazhwar have sung in praise of this Lord 'Sri Yadokthakari'. It is in the lotus tank of this temple that the first of the Alvars, the Poigai Azhwar was born in a Lotus of the poigai or the tank in the asterism "Sravana" in the month of Asvija. Aippasi Thiruvonam day is celebrated as the Saturumurai day of Poigai Azhwar in this temple on a grand scale.

Lord Sonnavannam Seidaperumal or the Lord Yadokthakari dwells here as Seshasayi beneath Vedaśara Vimana facing the west. The consort of Sri Yadokthakari is worshipped in the name of Sri Komalavalli. The brahmotsavam of this Lord is celebrated in asterism Revathi in the month of Panguni. Devotees come here every day in large numbers to have darshan and get their desire fulfilment by the grace of Lord Yadokthakari and Mother Goddess Sri Komalavalli.



THE TEMPLE OF ASHTABHUJA PERUMAL

PURANIC ORIGIN :

Brahma desired once to have the darshan of Lord Sriman Narayana as an archavatharamoorthi in an enchanting form with four arms bedecked with celestial conch, chakra, cub, and abhayahastha and decided to perform an Aswamedhayaga at Kanchi to cherish his desire. At that time Goddess Saraswathi had a misunderstanding with Brahma and stayed away from his company. So Brahma had to perform the sacrifice in Kanchi even without having Saraswathi by his side. Hence Saraswathi got angry and decided to cause impediments to the sacrifice started by Brahma. She deployed an army of demons who were all annihilated by Lord Vishnu. She then sent a Sarabha, a peculiar type of ferocious beast. Lord Vishnu had to take a superhuman form with eight arms equipped with eight weapons to destroy the Sarabha. Lord Vishnu in this form came to be called Ashtabhujaperumal, meaning the Lord with eight arms.

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION :

At a distance of two kilometers from Lord Varadaraja's temple in Little Kanchipuram is the temple of Ashtabhujaperumal, situated opposite to the temple of Sri Yadokthakari.

It is located in Hodgsonpet, and is in Thirukachinambi street near Rangaswamy Kulam. Ashtabhujaperumal is seen here beneath Chakragosha Vimana in a standing posture facing west. The form of Lord Vishnu with eight arms bedecked with celestial weapons is captivating. The four arms on the right are adorned with Sudarsanachakra-the celestial wheel, sword, lotus flower and arrow while the arms on the left are adorned with the celestial conch, bow, shield and cub. Just in front of the presiding deity is seen the processional deity (Utsava-moorthy) with Sridevi and Bhoodevi. Adjacent to this Utsava-moorthy, there is another processional deity called Sri Gajendravarada.

There is a sacred tank called Gajendrapushkarani in front of the temple on the left side. The unique feature of this temple is that this is the only vaishnavite temple in Kanchi where there is paramapadavasala, the gateway to paramapadam. There is a mandapam with four pillars called the Friday Mandapam behind which is the sanctum of mother Goddess Sri Pushpakavalli the consort of Sri Ashtabhujaperumal. It is customary here to worship this mother Goddess first before going round to worship the Lord. There is also a sannidhi for Sri Varahamoorthy within the main sanctum of this temple. Sri Varahamoorthy is seen here having his consort on his left lap and keeping his right foot firmly placed on the ground and his left foot on the hoods of two serpents. Just outside the temple are the sanctums of Sri Andal facing the east and Sri Anjaneya facing the south.

The Pallava kings improved the temple by doing a number of Kainkaryas. The Brahmotsava of this temple is celebrated in the month of Chithirai. The Gajendramoksha festival is also celebrated in this temple in the month of Adi in the asterism "Hastham".

A number of devotees visit this temple every day with prayers to Sri Ashtabhujaperumal to save them from fear and bestow the courage to face the problems of life and succeed in their pursuit for prosperity and peace.



SRI MUKTHEESWARA'S TEMPLE

Uhe deeds of the Divine are wonderful, and captivating. Sometimes God subjects His devotees to severe tests with the intention of bringing their noble traits to light, to make the world recognise their greatness and the superiority of their devotion. The places where such divine acts of the Lord are exhibited, are considered sacred and temples are constructed there for the Lord in commemoration of that divine happening. Such devine sports are performed both by Lord Vishnu and Lord Siva. Such sports by Lord Vishnu are described as Leelas and those of Lord Siva as Thiruvilaiyadalgal. If Alwars have sung in praise of such Vaishnavite temples they are called as Divyadesams. If the four Saiva saints known as Naalvar have sung in praise of the Sivakshethras they are called Padalpetra Sthalangal, the sacred places which were hailed by one or all of the four saints, Appar, Thirugnanasambandar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar. The noble devotees graced

by Lord Siva are known as Nayanmars. One such sacred place is Sri Muktheeswarar temple in Kancheepuram and one such great devotee Sri Thirukuripputhonda Nayanar.

Once there lived a washerman in Kancheepuram who was a devout saivite with remarkable traits and virtues. There was no trace of egoism whatsoever in him. He used to render selfless service to all devotees of Lord Siva by guessing their bent of mind correctly with intuition and fulfilling their immediate needs. Hence he became to be popularly known as 'Thirukuripputhondar'. His usual service was to wash the clothes of the devotees of Lord Siva who came on pilgrimage to Kancheepuram. He used to do this service voluntarily without expecting any return benefit.

Once in winter season, Thirukuripputhondar met an aged devotee of Siva whose lustrous body was completely besmeared by sacred ash. But he was wearing dirty tattered clothes. Thirukuripputhondar was deeply moved by this sight. He prostrated before the old man and requested him to grant him the privilege of washing his robes for him. The aged devotee of Siva had no spare dress to rely on and so hesitantly agreed to entrust the job to Thirukuripputhondar provided he would undertake to handover the washed clothes back to him before sunset so that he would not be made to expose himself to the biting cold of the winter night. Agreeing to this, Thirukuripputhondar collected the tattered dirty clothes of the aged devotee and went to the tank to wash them. He took great care to prevent any further damage to the already tattered clothes, washed them well and kept them spread for drying in the bright sunshine.

A few moments later, the sky was overcast and there was a heavy downpour of rain. The unexpected non-seasonal rain dampened the wet clothes and disheartened Thirukuripputhondar. He simply stood gazing at the sky. The incessant rains were further drenching the wet clothes. As it was drawing towards sunset, Thirukuripputhondar's body trembled

in the cold while his mind trembled in fear at the thought of committing the sin of breach of promise to the aged devotee.


The very thought of the old man shivering in biting cold, approaching the thondar for the washed clothes and his inability to handover the same made Thirukuripputhondar tremble in dismay. Like all noble souls who prefer to shed their lives rather than dishonour the plighted word, Thirukuripputhondar decided to commit suicide by striking his head against the granite stone used for washing the clothes. At that moment, Lord Sive appeared before him to make a timely intervention and reveal that the aged devotee was none other than Himself. Lord Siva praised the noble qualities of Thirukuripputhondar and asked him to continue his noble service assuring him of mukthi or liberation at the end. Lord Siva consecrated in the temple on the spot where this Thiruvilaiyadal occurred came to be called 'Muktheeswarar' and Thirukuripputhondar came to be known as 'Thirukurippu Thondanayanar'.

The temple of Sri Muktheeswarar is situated in Gandhi Road in Hodgsonpet very near to Javulikadaï Chatram. There is another sanctum of Garudeswarar in this temple. To the east of this temple and opposite to the Government Hospital, there is the shrine called Kanchi Thirunerikkaraikadu in a place called Thirukkalimedu. The Lord Siva here is said to have been worshipped by Indra and Thirugnanasambandar of the Naalvar has sung in praise of this Sathyanatheswarar.

Pilgrims to Kanchi visit the temple of Sri Muktheeswarar and carry with them the thoughts of the noble service of Thirukurippu Thondanayanar and the abundance of Grace of Lord Muktheeswarar.

THE TEMPLE OF SRI KACHAHAPESWARA

PURANIC ORIGIN :

he temple of Sri Kachahapeswara is one of the famous Siva temple in Big Kancheepuram, situated in Nellukara Street, near the Central Bus Stand. It is said that Lord Vishnu worshipped Lord Siva here and was blessed with Manmadha as his son. We find the beautiful Pallava architecture depicted in the sculptures of this temple.

Once Devendra came out victorious in a battle with a demon called Jambasura. Rejoicing at his triumph and brimming with pride, he was making a processional return seated on his celestial white elephant "Iravata". At that moment, sage Durvasa greeted him with a garland of flowers and offered it to him as Goddess Lakshmi's prasadam. But to his dismay, Devendra not only received it with scant respect but used it only to adorn the temple of his elephant, When the bees, hovering around the fragrant flowers, stung the elephant, it got irritated, pushed the garland, threw it on the ground, and trampled it under its feet. This incident incited

further the sage Durvasa, noted for his temperamental weakness. So he cursed Indra that he would cease to enjoy the grace of Goddess Lakshmi forthwith. Immediately all his riches got submerged in the milkly-ocean and Indra's dignity and prestige suffered a blow.

The grief-stricken Indra surrendered to Lord Vishnu for the restoration of his status. Lord Vishnu suggested the milkly-ocean be churned for getting back the vanished riches. The Devas and Asuras plunged into this venture jointly on an understanding that they would have an equal share of Amrutha the nectar, generated during that process. They used the mountain, Meru, as the churning-stick and the serpent, Vasuki, as the rope. At that time, Lord Vishnu took the form of a tortoise called Kachachapa or Koorma and bore the mountain Meru on His back to prevent it from getting drowned.

When the churning was in progress Vasuki, unable to withstand the continuous friction between its body and the rough mountain, ejected a dreadful poison called Halahala. The radiation of this poison darkened the body of Vishnu. The movement, of the Adi Koorma, unable to bear the oppressive radiation, agitated the milkly ocean violently causing distress to all creatures sheltered therein. The Devas and Asuras too would have run helter-skelter but for Lord Siva who restored calmness by consuming the deadly black poison. The halahala stopped in the neck of Lord Siva by the will of Goddess Gowri and remained as an ornament to the neck of Lord Siva-Hence Lord Siva came to be called Neelakanta thenceforth.

Greatly relieved, the Devas and Asuras continued their task. They secured many valuables which included the riches lost by Indra, nectar, Goddess Lakshmi, the Moon-and the precious gem, Kausthuba. The gods offered Lakshmi's hand in wedding to Lord Vishnu as a token of their gratitude and also presented Him the gem Kausthuba. As an atonement for causing, though not intentionally, distress to the creatures in

the sea, in the form of Kachchapa Lord Vishnu wanted to have Prayaschitha or penance and came to Kanchipuram to worship Lord Siva as per the latter's counsel. Hence Lord Siva in this shrine came to be called 'Kachchapeswara'. By securing His grace, Vishnu begot cupid.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE :

The temple has 3 prakaras with a north-facing tower. Just after the entrance to the temple, there is a sacred tank called Ishtasiddhi Theertham. It has four bathing ghats, each with a distinct power to reward the devotees having a dip there. Experience has substantiated the common belief that a holy dip in this tank, especially on Sundays, ensures longevity of life with sound health.

In this temple, noted for artistic sculptures, we have also the sannidhis of Jamhukeswara, Arunachaleswara, Kalahas-theeswara and Chidambareswarar, besides the sanctums of Sri Subrahmanya, Brahma, Saraswathi with eight arms Vishnu, Satyavachana Vinayakar and Durga.

Inscriptions reveal that the Pallava kings undertook many constructive works in this temple. There is a sculpture on a copper (Seppedu) plate depicting the Kachchapa worshipping Siva Linga, the presiding deity. The Brahmotsavam at this temple is celebrated in the month of Chaithra.

Pilgrims turn up large numbers to this shrine on Sundays in the month of Kartik to seek the Lord's grace.

THE TEMPLE OF SRI KAILASANATHA

STEADFAST DEVOTION OF SRI POOSALAR :

adavarkoman, a Pallava King, who ruled over Thondai Nadu, was a staunch devotee of Lord Siva. He constructed the temple of Kailasanatha in kanchipuram entrusting the work to eminent sculptors and fixed up an auspicious date for celebrating Mahakumbabishekam in a grand manner and all the arrangements were in progress.

At the same time there lived another devotee of Lord Siva, named Poosalar, in Thinnanoor, also called Tiruninravor in the same Thondainadu. He had a noble desire to construct a temple for Lord Siva. He approached all philanthropic minded people for help but to no purpose. They only mocked at his tall aims. He was thoroughly disappointed and was unable to execute the plan. However, he did not give up his idea of erecting a temple for Lord Siva. Realising that God

dwells in the hearts of sincere devotees, he was convinced that Lord Siva was already installed in his heart and he conceived the idea of building a temple for the deity within him without the necessity of resources. He visualised before his mental eye all the stages in his plan of construction, one by one in proper order, and in no time, his temple was ready for Kumbabishekam. It was a rare coincidence that he also fixed the date for the Kumbabishekam of the temple of his imagination on the same date fixed by the Pallava King for the Mahakumbabishekam of the Kailasanathar's temple in Kancheepuram.

In these circumstances, Lord Siva appeared before the King in his dream and asked him to alter the date fixed by him for Kumbabishekam as He would like to grace the Kumbabishekam of Poosalar's temple on that date. The King was astonished by the undue importance given by the Lord to a poor devotee's small temple. He, however decided to submit to the Divine will and also wanted to witness the Kumbabishekam of Poosalar's temple at Thiruninravur and have the darshan of Sri Poosalar, the great devotee. So he himself went to Tiruninravoor on that auspicious day to have darshan of the Kumbabishekam. There was no temple and no sign of festivity at all. He enquired the residents who only laughed at and ridiculed Poosalar as insane in as much as he was always prating of Kumbabishekam without constructing any temple. However, they guided the King to his residence.

The King narrated to him all about his dream. Poosalar was deeply moved by the Lord's recognition of his sincere devotion, He then explained to the King that he was celebrating on that day the Kumbabishekam of the deity, enthroned in the temple of his heart, as he was unable to raise a structural temple for want of resources. Appreciating his sentiments, the King constructed a temple in Tiruninravoor where he celebrated the Kumbabishekam prior to that of the temple of Kanchi as commanded by Lord Siva. By this Tiruvilaiyadal of Lord Siva the greatness of Poosalar Nayanar was made known to the world.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE :

The ancient temple of Kailasanatha is situated in the west end of Kanchi. The presiding deity of this temple, Lord Kailasanatha, is in the form of a Lingam with 16 facial bands. In this shrine, there is another lingam worshipped by Narada. The sculptural beauty of the churning of the milky-ocean and the idols of Bikshantanar, Gangadharar, Tirupurantakar, Somaskandar, Vishnu, Durga, Dakshinamurthy, Parasakthi in manifold forms and Kalasamharamoorthy on the walls in and around the Garbhagriha is striking. These walls also portray the scenes of Lord Siva's cosmic dance.

While circumambulating the deity around the Garbhagriha, we have to negotiate the very narrow entrance and exit only by crawling. This circumambulation, called "Swargapradakshinam" is believed to confer liberation without rebirth.

This temple is under the control of HR & CE Board of the Government of Tamilnadu and is protected as an ancient monument by the Archeological Department of the Government of India. Pilgrims from all over the country and foreigners visit this temple everyday. Sivarathri festival is celebrated grandly at this temple.

To the left of the road leading to this temple, there is a shrine called Anekathankavatham worshipped by Lord Vinayaka and sung by Sundaramoorthy Swamigal.

To the south of this temple, there is the temple of Tirumetralinathar in Pillayarpalayam.

The temple of Sri Kailasanathar built by sand stone stands to-day as an ancient monument attracting a large number of pilgrims who are astounded by the sculptural beauty of this art gallery and also carry the impression with them that God is not biased by status and that real devotion to God is always recognised and rewarded.

SRI KUMARAKOTTAM

The famous temple of Sri Subrahmanya known as Kumarakottam is located in West Raja Street near Gangaikondan Mandapam and Sri Sankaramutt in Big Kanchipuram. It is situated in between the temples of Sri Ekambareswara and Sri Kamakshi.

PURANIC ORIGIN - KUMARASAMBHAVA :

All living-beings in this Universe are but the reflected images of the Paramathman-the Supreme Being. The realisation of this truth is referred to as "Self realisation-knowledge of the self" or "Atmagnana" and a person attaining this is called "Atmagnani". An atmagnani is able to extricate himself from the harmful influence of the feelings of "I" and "Mine" trapping him in the net of illusion and leading to egoism and attachment to worldly affairs. He sets for himself the goal of escaping rebirth. Such an atmagnani is also called "Jeevanmuktha".

According to Siva Gnana Bodham, God appears before the matured soul in the form of a guru and reveals Himself to be the same as that of the soul, thus saving the soul from falling into the trap of illusion. The blissful evermeditating form of Sri Dakshinamoorthy, the earliest and foremost of gurus, emphasizes the greatness of a guru.

The influence of Maya of illusion is so powerful that even those with a fertile mental disposition conducive of becoming a Jeevanmuktha are trapped at the last moment. The story of Soorapadman, is a fitting example. Having performed a severe penance Soorapadma was able to get the Sakshathkara of Lord Siva. It was at this stage Maya started playing its role.

Soorapadma committed the folly of seeking a boon to be able to escape death rather than rebirth. Aware as he was of the inevitability of death, he saw no propriety in asking for a boon to evade death. Instead, he thought of a plan to avoid it. Knowing fully well that Lord Siva is neither equalled nor excelled by anyone, he cleverly sought a boon that he should face death only at the hands of some one excelling even Lord Siva in eminence and the boon was granted to him. The very thought of having secured a state of being free from the fear of death made Soorapadma egoistic and he started committing a number of atrocities. In order to protect the pious, and also to save, out of mere compassion, His devotee Surapadman of countless sins Lord Siva thought of putting an end to the asura's existence. To honour the peculiar boon granted to him, Lord Siva chose to procreate Himself into a Superior form and confer on him better status who later came to be called as Kumaraswami, Sri Subrahmanya and Swaminadha. The story runs as follows :

Once Lord Siva was sitting in Kailas in a state of yoga. Lord Siva the God with five faces, then assumed a six-faced form including the "Adhomuktha" perceptible only to great seers. The Devas who could no bear the sufferings inflicted by Soorapadma wanted Siva to divert His mind from penance

to Parvathi. So they deputed cupid to create an atmosphere in Kailash conducive to Love-making and turn the mind of Lord Siva towards Parvathi. Disturbed by Cupid, Lord Siva chanced to see Goddess Parvathi before Him and become infatuated with love. Noting the change in the state of His mind, Lord Siva searched for the cause and found Cupid to be the cause for disturbing His concentration on yoga. As Lord Siva got furious, his third eye of Fire got opened and as a result, Cupid was burnt to ashes. Then six sparks of fire got emanated from the forehead-eye of Lord Siva and reached a thicket of reeds in a Pond called "Saravana Poigai" where they took the form six children, by the grace of Goddess Parvathi mysteriously combined into one of extraordinary form with six faces and twelve hands and thence came to be called "Shadanana Shanmukha" or "Arumuga"-meaning a God with six faces. As the Shanmukha was exquisitely beautiful, He came to be called "Muruga" the beautiful. *Since He was earlier fostered by six celestial damsels called Krithakas, He attained the name "Karthikeya". Latter, He was made the Commander in-Chief of the army of the Devas in their battle with the Asuras-Thavakasura and Soorapadman. Hence His names Senani and Devasenapathi.

PURANIC ORIGIN OF KUMARAKOTTAM

Lord Brahma, Devendra and other Devas were once proceeding to Mount Kailasa to have darshan of Lord Siva and pay obeisance to Him Seeing Lord Subramanya on their way, all the Devas offered their salutations to Him but Lord Brahma, entertaining a wrong notion of Him as a mere child lacking in in erudition, showed Him no respect.

Irritated by this attitude of Brahma, the illustrious son of Lord Siva called Him and asked Him to explain the significance of "Pranava" the sacred syllable "OM". As Lord Brahma's

*As the son of Lord Siva He came to be called "Kumara" or "Sivakumara".

answer did not satisfy Him, the Kumara held Him captive and He took upon Himself the task of creation vested with Brahma. Lord Narayana reported this matter to Lord Siva and sought His sympathetic intervention. Lord Siva sent Nandikeswara to Kumara with a personal appeal to release Brahma but to no purpose. Then Lord Siva, like one desirous of striking down two mangoes with a Single stone Himself came to Kumara with the twin objectives of releasing Brahma and conferring a better status on Kumara than Himself. He asked Kumara to reveal the meaning of Pranava and also release Brahma. In reply, Kumara stated that the meaning of Pranava can only be learnt through a Guru and Lord Siva appreciated Kumara's stand and agreed to know the meaning of Pranava from Kumara considering Him as a Guru. It was then that Lord Subramanya initiated Lord Siva into the sacred Pranava Mantra by conveying the answer into His ears. Hence He came to be called as 'Sivagurunatha', Gnanadesika and Swaminatha meaning, "Preceptor" of the Adi Guru or the master of the Lord.

This divine sport of the Omniscient Lord Siva, enacting the role of an ignorant disciple, is intended just to instruct humanity that anyone seeking knowledge should himself take the initiative to resort to a guru and make an earnest appeal to impart knowledge. The sacred place 'Swamimalai' signifies this incident of elevation of Sri Kumara as Sivaguru or Swaminatha. Sri Kumara released Brahma and felt for having not acted on Lord Siva's instructions conveyed through Nandikeswara. So He wanted to have prayaschitha, as an atonement for transgressing His father's orders to release Brahma from captivity and to establish to the world that it is the duty of a son to honour the words of the father as even the slightest disregard would amount to committing a great sin.

So Sri Kumara wanted to do penance on earth as prayaschitha and chose the sacred place of Kanchi to worship Lord Siva, as Kanchi was glorified as Pralayajit Kshethra, the holy place which could withstand the wrath of deluge and

escaped destruction on account of its sacredness. The place where Kumara stayed in Kanchi and worshipped Lord Siva in the form of a Linga came to be known as Kumarakottam and the Siva Linga as "Devasenapatheesar", meaning "The Lord worshipped by Devasenapathi".

DESCRIPTION OF KUMARAKOTTAM

The form of Lord Siva, with His consort Uma Devi seated on His left and Lord Kumara in between them is known as Somaskandar. The temple of Kumarakottam, is located in between the temples of Lord Ekamreswara and Goddess Kamakshi, the three taken together resembling the form of Lord Somaskanda.

The presiding deity, Lord Kumara, is seen with a single face and four hands, the temporary form which He assumed when He undertook the task of creation on Him after taking Brahma as a captive. The upper right and left hands are embellished by a rosary and a water-pot respectively. The lower right hand is held as Abhaya Hastha Mudra and the lower left hand is majestically placed in his hip just above the thigh.

While circumambulating the inner Prakara, we see Santhana Ganapathi facing east and to his north we see Dhandapani. In the Ardha Mandapam, comprising the sannidhi of Lord Kumara, we come across the sannidhi of Lord Devesenapatheeswar, worshipped by the Kumara. Coming round, we see the idols of Vinayakamoorthy and Kachchiappa Sivacharyar facing south and west respectively. The processional deity of Lord Kumara is seen opposite to the sannidhi of Kachchiappa Sivacharyar. Following this, we have the sannidhis of Bhairava and Lord Vishnu in the name of Urugumulla Perumal.

Adjacent to this sannidhi, we come across the sannidhis with the processional dieties of Somaskandar, Muthukumara-swamy, Navaveerargal and Gajavalli.

In the northern corner of the eastern side of the same Prakara, we come across Mother Valli's sannidhi and in the southern corner Mother Deivasena's sannidhi. In between them, we come across Navagraha Sannidhi.

While coming out of the temple, we see a marble statue of Vallalar Sri Ramalinga Swami. At the left side of the entrance to the temple, there is a sannidhi with a huge idol of Varasiddhi Vinayakar. The idol of Lord Anjaneya in one the pillars of the sixteen pillared mandapam is worshipped by devotees as a bestower of boons.

There is also a sacred tank in the eastern side of the temple.

ILLUSTRIOUS RECIPIENTS OF THE LORD'S GRACE

Lord Kumara as Gnanaguru graced many of His devotees with supreme knowledge and also the capacity to compose poems who become great by singing in His praise. Note worthy among them are Kumara Guruparar, Devaraya Swamigal and Pamban Swamigal the famous authors of Pillai Tamil, Skanda Sashti Kavacham and Shanmuga Kavacham respectively. In some cases, Lord Kumara made His devotees distinguished by their works, helping them by composing Himself the first line of the leading verses of their poems. Arunagirinathar and Kachchiappa Sivacharyar are the recipients of such rare privilege and the works which made them great were Tiruppugazh and Kandapuramam respectively,

Once, there lived a pious temple priest in Kanchi by the name Kalathiappa Sivacharyar who was noted for his scholarship in Sastras. He was a staunch devotee of Lord Subrahmanya of Kumarakottam. He was yearning for progeny for a long time, and was praying to Lord Muruga to grant him a son. By His grace, he begot a male child, who came to be called Kachchiappa Sivacharyar. He became proficient in Vedas, Agamas and all Sastras and after initiation into priest hood, became the priest of the Kumarakottam temple.

Oneday, Lord Kumara appeared in his dream and asked Kachchiappa Sivacharya to write His biographical story, Kandapuram, in a verse form. Aware of the limitations of his scholastic attainments and scholarship he hesitated to take up that voluminous great work. It was then that Lord Kumara endowed him with the rare literary talent necessary for that purpose and also made the beginning of writing the work by Himself composing the first line of the leading verse commencing with the words "Thigatachakkara Semmugam Aindulan".

After completing Kandapuram Kachchiappa Sivacharyar wanted to have the 'Arangetram', the first public recitation of the work in a mandapam in Kumarakottam. After he finished reciting the very first line itself demanding grammatical authenticity of the same as according to him no such usage was found in any of the standard grammar books. Sri Kachchiappa Sivacharyar told the Sadas - the assembly of learned persons that the first line was not his own and was that of Lord Kumara Himself. The critic at once retorted that whoever might be its author, he could not give his approval unless it was grammatical. Unable to convince the poet, Sri Kachchiappar requested for time and the meeting was adjourned to the next day Kachchiappar had no other recourse than to pray to Lord Muruga to help him out.

The next day, Lord Kumara Himself appeared in that august assembly in the guise of a poet and established the correctness of the usage of the word Thigatachakara by quoting authority by reference to the work on Grammar alled 'Veerasozhiam'. The assembly of the learned, herefore ruled out the objection raised the previous day. The new poet then disappeared from the scene. The gathering soon realised that the strange poet was none other than Lord Kumara and praised His benovelance in appearing Himself before the gathering only to bring to light the greatness of Sri Kachchiappa Sivacharyar. The Arangetram of the great work in Tamil 'Kandapuram' was then duly completed in the same


Mandapam which came to be called "The Kandapurana Arangetra Mandapam".

Another illustrious devotee who is the recipient of the grace of Lord Kumara of Kumarakottam is Pamban Swamigal. Once Sri Pamban Swamigal, in the course of his pilgrimage came to Kancheepuram. After having darshan of the temples there, he was returning without seeing Kumarakottam as the place was shrouded by a dense growth of vegetation. At that time, Lord Kumara appeared before him in the form of a lad and enquired whether he had seen Kumarakottam and led him there with other devotees and then disappeared. This is another instance to extell the boundless compassion of Lord Kumara of Kumarakottam in Kanchi.

Lord Kumara of Kumarakottam is believed to be fond of Thenabhishekam and so he is anointed with honey only except on the day of Deepavali when oil is used. Among the festivals, Vaikasi Visakai Festival is celebrated as Brahmotsavam. Adikrithika and Skandasashti are other important festivals. Occasions such as Shasti, Krithigai and all Tuesdays draw large number of devotees to this temple yearning for the grace of Lord Kumara of Kumarakottam.



The Temple of Pandava Dhootha Perumal

 The temple of Lord Sri Krishna, called Pandava Dootha Perumal is one of the famous Vaishnavite temples in Big Kancheepuram. It is one of the 108 important Sri Vaishnavite shrines known as Divyadesams and is eulogised by Sri Bhoothathazar, Peyazhwar, Thirumazhisaiazhwar and Thirumangai Azhwar.

PURANIC ORIGIN :

God's countless inimitable traits such as magnanimity, easy-accessibility and the inclination to come down to the level of the devotees and shower His grace out of abundance of compassion, have earned for him many titles such as "Saranya" ~ the refuge of the distressed, "Sathyasankalpa" ~ He who make things happen to His desire and so on. The Creation, Protection and Destruction of the vast universe are just an instant act of His

volition. To safeguard the interest of pious, the Almighty at times appears on the earth in a superhuman form which is called an avatara or an incarnation. His incarnations have a threefold objective viz., Protection of the Virtuous, annihilation of the wicked and establishment of Dharma. Thereafter He chooses to dwell in the sacred shrines in the form of idols, referred to as Archavatharamoorthis. to facilitate the posterity to know the glory of His devine sports: One such Archavathara form is the Pandavadhootha Perumal, sanctifying the shrine "Padagam" in Kanchipuram.

During His incarnation as Sri Krishna, the Lord saved the virtuous Pandavas from the clutches of the evilminded Kauravas, strove to make clear the distinction between Dharma and Adharma, and proved the ultimate triumph of Dharma over Adharma. When He visited Vidura's residence. Vidura, immersed in joy and forgetting himself, offered Him the peel of a plantain thinking that he was offering only the fruit. To avoid his disappointment, Lord Krishna took it heartily. The Omnipresent Lord allowed Himself to be bound by Sahadeva's affection. He did many more queer things to show His Sowlabhya. the most remarkable amongst them being His acceptance to take up the role of an emissary of Pandavas and to go to the court of the Kauravas.

An efficient emissary should possess two characteristics. First he should convey the message so skillfully as to render it acceptable. Secondly he should complete the mission to the satisfaction of the persons whom he represents. Sri Krishna went to the Kauravas as an emissary of peace but returned to the Pandavas camp agreeing for a battle.

A doubt naturally arises as to whether He fulfilled His mission successfully. We get the answer to this question in the chapter dealing with Yudhishtra's gambling in the game of dice wherein, except him, the other four brothers as well as Draupadi swear to take revenge on Duryodhana and his gang. Thus looking retrospectively, there is no room for doubt about Krishna's

efficient handling of His mission. He agreed for war just to keep their promises alive and that is why He even accepted to become Parthasarathy, the charioteer of Arjuna.

During this mission, the foolish Duryodhana even attempted to kill Him devising a plan to make Him occupy a seat with a carpet spread over a void underneath so that it would tumble down, the moment it was occupied, into an under-ground room where mighty wrestlers would be ready to crush Him. Duryodhana, not only dragged the emissary into a heated discussion, little realising that His duty was just to deliver the message but also plotted to kill Him against all canons of statesmanship.

Contrary to their expectations, the Omniscient and the Omnipotent Krishna, assumed Viswaroopa, in comparison with which the deep pit constructed by them looked in dimension just like a pin-hole, and could not be trapped. The pious in that assembly worshipped Him chanting Ashtakshara mantra and the wicked trembled in fear to face His wrath.

Even the blind king, Dhritarashtra, was fortunate enough, to get eye sight by His grace to have darshan of His glittering form. When Lord Krishna offered him a boon, he desired to become blind as before since he did not want to see the temporal things after perceiving the eternal form of the Lord. This is one of the most important episodes in Krishnavatara.

When Janamejaya, the great grand-son of Arjuna and sage Hareetha performed severe penance to have a glimpse of that form of Sri Krishna, the Lord gave darshan to them in that magnificent form and that sacred place is the shrine of 'Padagam' in Kancheepuram. A dharshan of Lord Sri Krishna in this form is a horrific experience.

ILLUSTRIOUS RECIPENTS OF THE LORD'S GRACE :

There lived a great learned Ekadandi Sanyasi by name Yagnamoorthy in Vinjamur near the village Buchireddipalem in Nellore District in Andhra Pradesh. He was contemporary of Sri

Ramanuja. Having heard about the greatness of Srimad Ramanuja, Yagnamoorthy became jealous. Unable to accept Ramanuja as 'Yathiraja' Yagnamoorthy came to Kanchi and invited Ramanuja for a debate. Yagnamoorthy was a great scholar well-versed in Nyaya, Meemamsa, Vyakarana and Tarka Sastra. The debate started on an understanding that if Ramanuja was defeated, he should give up Sri Bhashyakainkaryam and that if Yagnamoorthy was defeated, he should become Ramanuja's disciple.

The debate continued for 17 days both sharing equal honours. On the 17th day, Yagnamoorthy put a question which made Ramanuja ask for a day's time to answer. Yagnamoorthy agreed. Ramanuja prayed Lord Varadharaja who guided him to locate the answer from Alavandar's treatise called "Mayavadakandanam". The next day Sri Ramanuja won the debate. Yagnamoorthy then prostrated before him and became his disciple. Ramanuja told him that only Lord Varadharaja's grace helped him in his argument and the credit for the success should go only Lord Varadharaja. On becoming the disciple of Srimad Ramanuja Yagnamoorthy became a Thridandi Sanyasin and came to be called Arulalapeduman Emperumanar, combining the names of both Arulala the Varadhraja and Emperumanar Sri Ramanuja.

The presiding deity of this temple, Pandavadhoota Perumal imparted 'Knowledge of the self' to Arjuna in Bhagavat Gita during the battle of Kurukshetra extending for 18 days. As Yagnamoorthy got the privilege to have Ramanuja as his spiritual guide in the sanctum sanctorum of Pandava Dhootha Perumal after the debate for 18 days, he decided to stay in His sannidhi throughout and spread the doctrine of Visishtadvaita. Even today only his descendents are engaged in doing Aradhanakainkaryam in this temple.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE :

It is situated near Gangaikondan Mandapam and Sri Ekamreswara's temple in Siva Kanchi or Big Kanchipuram. The inscriptions found on the northern and southern sides of the

temple Vemana detail the constructive works undertaken by Kulothunga Chola in this temple.


The Lord, dwelling under Bhadra Vimana, is seen in a sitting posture facing east, His Abhaya Hastha signifying the doctrine of surrender enunciated in the charamasloka of Bhagavat Gita beginning with 'Sarva Dharman Parityajya'. There is a separate sanctum for Mother Goddess Rukmani, the consort of the Lord.

Every year, Brahmotsavam is celebrated for 10 days in the month of Avani beginning from Sri Jayanti. In the asterism Bharani, in the month of Kartigai, festival in honour of Arulala Peruman Emperumanar, is celebrated on a grand scale.



THE TEMPLE OF SRI EKAMRESWARAR

PANCHALINGA KSHETRAS :

he five primary elements of creation, namely Panchabhootas which are among the constituents of Nature, called Prakriti, are earth (Prithivi), Water (Appu), Fire/Light (Thejas) Air (Vayu) and Space (Akasa). God, who utilises them for creation by an instant act of His will, is called Purusha. It should not however be construed that Purusha is the instrumental cause and Prakriti, the material cause for creation of this universe. The prevalence of God's presence and His power in all the constituents of Prakrit accounts for their power. Hence, Purusha is the real material cause though illusion or Maya creates a feeling that Prakriti is something distinct from Purusha.

As a symbol of the prevalence of His power in the Panchabhootas, Lord Siva dwells in 5 shrines called Panchalinga Kshetras. They are as follows :

Name of the shrine	Other Names	Location	Remarks
1 Kancheepuram	Pralayajit Satyavrata- kshetra	Chingleput Dt in Tamilnadu	Prithivilinga kshetra (Earth)
2 Tiruvanikoil	Jambukes- waram	Trichirapalli in Tamilnadu	Appulinga kshetra (Water)
3 Thiruvanna- malai	Tiruvarunai Arunachales- waram	North Arcot Dt in Tamilnadu	Jyotirlinga kshetra (Fire/Light)
4 Kalahasti	—	Chittoor Dt in AndhraPradesh	Vayulinga kshetra (Air)
5 Chidambaram	Tillai	South Arcot Dt in Tamilnadu	Akasalinga kshetra (Space)

PURANIC ORIGIN :

Once when Lord Siva and His consort Gowri Devi were sporting amorously sharing the same seat in Kailash she covered His eyes with Her hands for fun. As the two eyes of the Lord which are considered to be the Sun and the Moon were closed by Gowri, the whole world at that time was plunged into dense darkness, causing distress to all the creatures in the Universe. Realising this, Lord Siva opened His third-eye of fire in His forehead to illuminate the Universe and rendered relief to the living beings. Though Gowri's action was an unmindful act of sport, the Lord as kedher to perform penance on the earth as an atonement for her crassitude.

In deference to His command, she decided to do penance in Kanchi. She manifested Herself in the form of a female child in Badrikasrama. On seeing the child, the sage Kathyayana longing for progeny, brought Her up in his custody. Hence Her name 'Katyayani'

As She grew up, the sage, aware of the purpose of Her incarnation, sent Her to the South with his blessings. He gave Her 1. a yogadandam, 2. a rosary, 3. skin of a tiger, 4. a holy book, 5. fried green gram, 6. sand of the Ganges, 7. an umbrella, 8. a fan made of palyra leaves, 9. two chowries (fly-whisks), 10. a water-pot, 11. Vidayadharam, 12. deepasthambam and 13. Ganges water.

He told her that as soon as she reached Kanchipuram, these would be transformed into 1. a trident, 2. a Bilvagarland, 3. Somavritta, 4. Kamadhenu, 5. sprouted greendhal, 6. a lingam 7. a serpent ornament 8. a parrot 9. two beautiful woman 10. the pedestal of the lingam, 11. a needle respectively.

From Badrikasrama, Katyayani came to Kasi where a severe drought had set in tormenting and impoverishing the people. Seeing the plight of the people and taking compassion, on them She caused a heavy downpour of rain and high yield of crops. She Herself fed the people to their hearts content and earned the title of Annapoorani. Then She continued Her journey towards the South. She recognised Kanchi as per the guidance of sage Kathyayana. She constructed a Sivalingam out of sand employed the two Sakthis, who were two chowries before, on guard and stood on the top of the needle and performed severe penance under a mango tree.

Lord Siva wanted to perform a divine sport by putting Gowri to test. He released Ganges from His matted hair. Seeing the floods of Ganges approaching Her penance-site she shouted 'Kampa Kampa', expressing Her fear. Hence that river came to be called 'Kampa'. She employed one of Her attendants a manifestation of sakthi to check the floods. The sakthi then assumed the form of Kali and stored up the

floods in a skull held on Her hands. Hence her name Maha Pralayabandhini.

Then Lord Siva made the floods in the skull overflow, Seeing the floods again, Katyayani prayed to Her brother, Lord Narayana to come to Her rescue. Then Vishnu took Viswaroopa, prevented the floods momentarily and advised Her to surrender to Lord Siva, the originator of the floods. Taking up His advice, she embraced the sandy lingam (Prithivi Lingam) with both hands to prevent its dissolution in the floods. Infatuated by love, Lord Siva showered His grace on Her and on Her prayers, He graciously accepted and chose to dwell permanently in that form of Prithivilingam at the trunk of the sacred mango tree, with the names Kameswara, Ekamranatha and Choothanatha meaning "The Lord of the sole Mango tree". His other names are Kachi Tiru Ekamban and Tiruvekambanathar.

When the celestials prayed to the Lord to give them the rare dharsan with Goddess Gowri as the Divine couple on their wedding day, He fulfilled their desire by accepting the hand of Kathyayani with the name of Elavarkuzhali. To commemorate this sacred occasion, this is celebrated as Tirukalyanotsavam in the Panguni Uttirarn day during the brahmotsavam.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE :

The glory of Lord Ekamreswara has been extolled by Tirugnanasambandar, Appar, Sundarar and Manickavachagar known as the great four or Nalwar in their divine songs Kanchi Kottayappa Naickar a great exponent of folk songs, Muthuswami Dikshitar of the trinity of Karnataka Music and Pattinathar have also sung in praise of His glory, Details of this temple could be found in Periapuranam, Kanchipuranam. Manimekalai and Mattha Vilasa Prahasanam. The temple is very famous for its sculptures.

The temple has the tallest tower in Kanchi with a height of 58 metres or 192 feet. This 9 tier Rajagopuram was constructed by Sri Krishnadevaraya, the Emperor of Vijayanagar in 1909

Pilgrims coming to Kanchi from Madras via Poovirundavalli and Sri Perumpudur could see this gopuram even from a long distance.

In the first inner Prakara, we come across the sannidhi of Goddess Mahapralayabandhini. Adjacent to this, we have the processional deity as Somaskandar. Adjoining this, we see the trunk of the mango tree which is the sacred Sthalavriksha. The four vedas are supposed to be its branches. It is here that Katyayani worshipped Siva. This 60 feet tall tree is more than 3500 years old. It yields fruits of four different tastes from its four different branches. When sage Markandeya survived a deluge, this tree, itself a manifestation of the Lord's form, supported him. At the trunk of the tree, Lord Siva with "Chinmudra" dwells as Somaskandar. Under this peetam we have darshan of Kamakshi in penance, Lingotbavar and the Goddess embracing the Lord.

In the Garbagriha, Lord Siva is seen as Prithivilingam, adorned by a silver Kavacham or covering. As the idol is made of sand, it is only the pedestal of the lingam that is anointed.

The Kings of Chola, Pallava and Vijayanagara Empires. Lord Hudson, Collector of Chingleput District, under British rule in 1799 and Natukkottai Nagarathars in 1900 carried out many constructive works in this temple. Recently, in 1979 the Mahakumbabishekam was performed. With the blessings of His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya, Sri Jeyendra Saraswathi Swamikal, the 69th Pontiff of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam.

OTHER SANNIDHIS IN THE TEMPLE :

On the two sides of the Rajagopuram, we have the sannidhis of Ganapathi and Subramanya. On entering the temple, we see a mandapam called Vahana Mandapam, Sarabesa Mandapam or Navarathri Mandapam. Next to Rajagopuram in the inner prakara, we see a 1000 pillar mandapam. On the way to this mandapam we see a tank which was once the river Kampa. Even now it is believed that this Kampa river flows as

an under-ground stream here. It is on the banks of this river that the Divine Mother performed penance. At the entrance to this mandapam, we have the sannidhi of Vikata Chakra Vinayakar, the Sthala Vinayakar of Kanchipuram.

Adjacent to the flag-staff of the temple, we have a sannidhi called Tirukkachi Mayanam and in front of it a Kalyana mandapam named after the renowned Philanthropist Pachayappa Mudailar, Thirukkachimayanam, Valeesam, Rishabesam and Satyanadeesam are situated on 4 sides within the precincts of Ekamreswarar temple.

The big tank in the temple is called Sivagangai Theertham. On entering the temple, the top roofing, the tall pillars and the sculptures therein present the spectacle of an art-treasure. In two of these pillars facing each other, the scenes of the Divine Mother converging the eyes of Lord Siva with Her hands and their wedding after Her penance are depicted.

Adjacent to the trunk of the mango tree, called Mavadi in Tamil, we have the sannidhi of Sri Kumaraswami, with the name of Mavadikandan. Next to this is the sannidhi of Elavarkuzhali Amman. Throughout the inner prakara several lingams are consecrated, one among them, called Saharalingeswarar, with 1008 lingas cut in one single lingam. We can also see here the idols of 63 Nayanmars along with their processional idols. There is a separate sannidhi of Sri Nataraja, depicting Lord siva performing the cosmic dance. In the inner prakara there is a sanctum of Lord Vishnu by the name Nilathathundaperumal, facing west in standing posture opposite to Lord Ekambareswarar. During the churning of the milky ocean when Lord Vishnu was oppressed by the scorching radiation of the poison, Halahala, the pleasantly cold lunar rays gave Him solace. Further when Lord Vishnu assumed Viswaroopa at Katyayani's request to prevent the floods, the rays of the moon fell directly on His throat illuminating the same. Hence His name. This is one of the 108 important Vaishnavite shrines and is eulogised by Thirumangai Azhwar.

There is a temple called Onakanthantali in the corner of Panchupettai big-street going westward behind Ekamreswarar temple. The presiding-diety, Onakanteswarar, was worshipped by Onan and Kantan, two leaders of the army of Jalandhara. Sundaramoorthy Nayanar sang in praise of this diety and secured gold by His grace.

FESTIVALS :

Panguni Uttara Festival is celebrated as Brahmotsavam. Some of the salient features of the Brahmotsavam are:


Fifth day	:	Morning	Adhikara Nandhi in Silver
		Evening	Ravaneswara Vahanam
Sixth day	:	Morning	63 Nayanmars
		Night	Silver Car festival
Ninth day	:	Night	Silver Mavadi Seva
Tenth day	}	Night	Tirukkalyanotsavam
Panguni Uttaram			

A special feature of this Kalyanotsavam is that many young birdes and birde-groom get married, at a time on the same auspicious occasion in the same Kalyana Mandapam without any distinction of caste, social status etc. This Panguni Uttiram festival is considered to be a festival promoting national integration. Pilgrims from all over the country visit this temple every day while lakhs of devotees come to this temple during the Brahmotsavam to get their desires fulfilled by the Grace of Lord Sri Ekamreswara.



THE TEMPLE OF ULAGALANDA PERUMAL

PURANIC ORIGIN :

 All of us know the greatness of Sri Prahalada's devotion to God and his undaunted faith in the immeasurable kindness of Lord Vishnu. To demonstrate His Omnipresence, Lord Vishnu emerged from a pillar during His incarnation as Narasimha, killed the Hiranyakasipu and protected Prahalada, His true devotee. The grandson of that Prahalada was the Emperor Mahabali. He was also an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu like his grand-father. He performed severe penance and secured a boon from Lord Brahma that he should never swerve from the path of Dharma in thought, word and deed. He ruled over the Kingdom strictly observing the code of royal conduct. In spite of his erudition, he succumbed to the instigation of other demons and decided to annex the heavens,

once belonging to his ancestors, from Indra the Lord of celestials. He sent word to Indra commanding him to give up the possession of the heavens. Not getting any reply from Indra, he decided to wage a war with him. Afraid of his prowess, Indra left the heavens without offering any resistance. Mahabali, then usurped the heavens.

Indra, the son of Kasyapa, reported the matter to his mother Adhiti. She prayed to Lord Vishnu for succour. In response to her prayers and desirous of restoring the heavens to Indra, Lord Vishnu incarnated as the son of Adhiti in the form of a dwarf. Hence His name Vamana. Lord Vishnu knew fully well that Mahabali strictly adhered to the path of Dharma. There is an old saying that Dharma protects one who protects it. As Mahabali never deviated from the path of Dharma, the multitude of his virtuous deeds should certainly stand him in good stead. If he were to be killed in a direct combat by Lord Vishnu, it would shatter the very foundations of Dharma. However he had to be subdued in order to restore the heavens to Indra and for this also, there must be some justification. According to the procedure laid down in the sastras only person who performs one hundred Aswamedha yagas is competent to occupy the throne of the Heavens and is considered fit for the Indrapadavi. One should deserve before one desires to rise up to an exalted position. But Mahabali did not perform one hundred Asvamedha sacrifices to enable him to acquire the position of Indra. He annexed the Heavens to his kingdom by usurping the same from India by sheer prowess and to that extent Lord Vishnu opined that Mahabali had deviated slightly from Dharma and deserved to be punished. Hence the Lord hit upon a plan to subdue him not by force but by an act of Dharma in which Mahabali, who annexed the heavens in a moment, would forfeit the same likewise.

To execute, His plan, Lord Vishnu as Vamana, a bachelor with a diminutive stature, went to see Mahabali on the banks of the river Narmada where he was performing a sacrifice called

“Vaishnava”. He told him that he wanted to do penance in seclusion and requested a dana or grant for that purpose, so much land as He could cover with His three footsteps. At that time Sukracharya, the preceptor of Asuras, learning by intuition that Lord Vishnu Himself had come there as a malicious mendicant, cautioned him not to yield to His request in haste. Mahabali paid no heed to his words because he thought that if He happened to be Vishnu, it would be a great privilege for him to provide alms for Him from his own hand held at a higher level to that of His Varadahastha, renowned for granting boons to the entire creation. He took his Kamandala, the water-pot and began to offer the holy waters into Vamana’s hand in conformity with the procedure to be followed before making any gift. At that time, Sukracharya in a last minute bid to save him from the impending calamity, took the form of a bee, entered the nozzle of the Kamandala and obstructed the flow of water. Noticing this Maha Vishnu pierced the obstruction with a Dharba grass and as a result, Sukracharya who was in the form of a bee had to lose one of his eyes.

The diminutive Vamana received the holy waters from Mahabali, then assumed a mighty form in which He came to be called Trivikrama and began to measure the three steps even as the astonished Mahabali was simply gazing. The first step covered the earth and the second the heavens! There was no space where He could place his third step!! At that time, the great and generous Mahabali offered his own head for placing His third step. Trivikrama planted His foot on Mahabali’s head and sent him to Pathala, the nether world and graced him to be its ruler, thereby restoring Indra to his Kingdom in the heavens. He had also graced Mahabali with the rare and unique Privilege of the touch of His foot while the Devas and the sages strive for yagas to reach that lotus feet of Lord Vishnu and thus rewarded Mahabali also for following Dharma.

In response to the prayers of Adisessha, Lord Vishnu gave in Kancheepuram darshan in that form of Trivikrama or Ulagalanda Perumal.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE :

The temple of Ulagalanda Perumal is near Big Kancheepuram Bus stand and Sri Kamakshi Ambal temple. The Shrine is referred to as Peragam in the hymns of Azhwars. The Lord Dwells under Sara or Srikara-Vimana in a standing posture facing the west. He is seen pointing two fingers of His right hand as if to show that He had already measured the earth and the heavens in two steps and pointing one finger of His left hand as if to ask Mahabali where He could plant His third step. He keeps His right foot aloft to show that He had already measured the earth and the heavens and His left foot on the head of Mahabali. To enable devotees to have darshan of His full stature, a lamp fixed to a big stick is lit and held aloft. Tirumazhisai Azhwar and Tirumangai Azhwar have sung in praise of this deity as "Peragathan". The consort of this deity is worshipped here, as 'Mother Amrutavalli'.

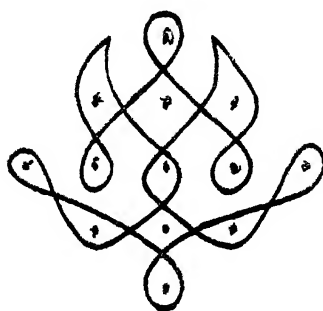
In this temple, there are five Sri Vaishnavite sacred places known as divya desams. They are (1) Peragam and Ooragam always referred to together, (2) Neeragam, (3) Karagam and (4) Karvanam.

In a side room of the Garbagriha of Ulagalanda Perumal, we have the shrine called Ooragam, where we can have dharshan of Adisesha. Azhwars have sung in praise of Peragathan and Oorgathan always together. Devotees perform special Abhishekams and adorn this Ooragathan with Chandanakappu covering the idol with sandal coating.

In the shrine called Neeragam dwells Lord Jagadeeswara Perumal under Jagadeeswara Vimana in a standing posture facing east, as he once gave dharshan to sage Akrura. His consort is worshipped by devotees as 'Mother Nilamangai Nachiar'. In the shrine called Karagam dwells Karunakara Perumal under Ramya Vimana in a standing posture facing south, who gave darshan to sage Niketana. His consort is worshipped by the devotees as 'Mother Padmamani'. Tirumangai Azhwar has sung in praise of Karagam.

The shrine, Karvanam is situated in the prakara of Ulagalanda Perumal temple, Karvana Perumal called Nava-neetha Chora who dwells under Pushpaka Vimana in a standing posture facing west is said to have given dharshan to Parvathi, Mahabali and Aswathama. His consort is worshipped by the devotees as 'Mother Komalavalli'. The processional deities of Neeragathan and Karagathan are kept in the shrine of Karvanaperumal.

In the temple of Ulagalanda Perumal, Brahmotsavam is celebrated in the asterism Punarvasu in the month of Thai. The archakas of this temple are the descendants of Parimelazhagar the renowned commentator on Tirukkural. Opposite to this temple also called Vamana Moorthi Devasthanam, there is a sannidhi of Chathurbhuja Anjaneya-Sri Hanuman with four arms. A number of pilgrims visit the temple of Sri Vamana Murthi everyday and have dharshan of Ulagalandaperumal, the magnificent form of Sri Vishnu in Trivikrama Avathara and offer prayers to get their desires fulfilled.





THE TEMPLE OF GODDESS SRI KAMAKSHI

SRI KAMAKSHI -
THE PRESIDING DEITY OF KANCHEEPURAM

According to the puranas, Goddess Parasathi, with the name of Goddess Kamakshi showering Her blessings on Her devotees, is the presiding deity of the city of Kanchi. The glory of Kamakshi is found described in Devi Mahatmya Adyaya of Markandeya Purana, Lalithopakyanam of Brahmanda Purana, Sanathkumara Samhita of Skanda Purana and Kanchi Purana. Among the idols of Sakthi, Sri Kanchi Kamakshi alone is believed to be replete with all the characteristic attributes of Sri Lalitha Tripura Sundari, worshipped by Sri Vidya hymns. Among the 64 Sakthi Peetas, Jagannatham is regarded as Odyana or Girdle Peeta. Jwalamuki as Jalandara Peeta and Kancheepuram as Kamaraja Peeta. Even among these three, Kancheepuram, regarded as the navel of the earth, is considered most sacred.

Goddess Kamakshi is so called for two reasons: (1) She fulfils the desires of the devotees by just a glance of Her gracious eyes. (2) The letters 'Ka' and 'Ma' refer to Goddess Saraswathi and Goddess Lakshmi respectively. Sri Kamakshi showered Her grace through Her gracious glances of Her right and left eyes on Brahma and Lord Vishnu respectively and and blessed Them with Saraswathi and Lakshmi to become their consorts. As a mark of showing Their respect and gratitude to the Goddess Sri Kamakshi, Sri Lakshmi and Saraswathi, each with a chowrie, stand on Her two sides doing the sacred service of fanning. Sri Kamakshi is enthroned in Sri Kamakoti Peetam. This signifies two things: (1) She fulfills the desires of Her devotees who worship Her with a view to attain material prosperity by granting wealth and boons in crores or in plenty. (2) The four principal objects of human life, called Purusharthas, are Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. She grants not only the first three needed for life on earth but also the ultimate Purushartha Viz., Moksha or liberation leading to eternal bliss. The explanations follow from the meanings of the words "Kama" and "Koti". Kama means desire or object, 'Koti' means a crore or the end denoting the saturation point or the ultimate.

There are a number of temples for Goddess Kamakshi in India. The temples of Kamakya in Assam, Kamachcha in Sri Kasikameswara temple in Varanasi, Jonnavada Kamakshi-on the banks of the river Pinakini near Buchireddipalayam in Kovur Taluk, Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh, Kamakshi Amman in Sri Ekambareswarar temple in the Thanga Salai Street at Madras, Mangadu Kamakshi in penance in Mangadu Village near Poondamalli, Sri Kamakshi Devi enthroned in Sri Kemakoti Peedam in Kanchi and Swarna Kamakshi called Bangaru Kamakshi in Thanjavur are all very famous. Besides these, there are temples for Kamakshi in Chingleput, Pondicherry, Villupuram, Vishnampetti, Kallaperambur, Chattikulam, Cuddalore, Karuvazhakkurai near Mayuram, Edayatrumangalam near Pattukottai, Negeswarar Sannidhi in Kumbakonam, Trichy

Goddess Kamakshi is so called for two reasons: (1) She fulfils the desires of the devotees by just a glance of Her gracious eyes. (2) The letters 'Ka' and 'Ma' refer to Goddess Saraswathi and Goddess Lakshmi respectively. Sri Kamakshi showered Her grace through Her gracious glances of Her right and left eyes on Brahma and Lord Vishnu respectively and blessed Them with Saraswathi and Lakshmi to become their consorts. As a mark of showing Their respect and gratitude to the Goddess Sri Kamakshi, Sri Lakshmi and Saraswathi, each with a chowrie, stand on Her two sides doing the sacred service of fanning. Sri Kamakshi is enthroned in Sri Kamakoti Peetam. This signifies two things: (1) She fulfills the desires of Her devotees who worship Her with a view to attain material prosperity by granting wealth and boons in crores or in plenty. (2) The four principal objects of human life, called Purusharthas, are Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. She grants not only the first three needed for life on earth but also the ultimate Purushartha Viz., Moksha or liberation leading to eternal bliss. The explanations follow from the meanings of the words "Kama" and "Koti". Kama means desire or object, 'Koti' means a crore or the end denoting the saturation point or the ultimate.

There are a number of temples for Goddess Kamakshi in India. The temples of Kamakya in Assam, Kamachcha in Sri Kasikameswara temple in Varanasi, Jonnavada Kamakshi-on the banks of the river Pinakini near Buchireddipalayam in Kovur Taluk, Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh, Kamakshi Amman in Sri Ekambareswarar temple in the Thanga Salai Street at Madras, Mangadu Kamakshi in penance in Mangadu Village near Poondamalli, Sri Kamakshi Devi enthroned in Sri Kamakoti Peedam in Kanchi and Swarna Kamakshi called Bangaru Kamakshi in Thanjavur are all very famous. Besides these, there are temples for Kamakshi in Chingleput, Pondicherry, Villupuram, Vishnampetti, Kallaperambur, Chattikulam, Cuddalore, Karuvazhakkara near Mayuram, Edayatrumangalam near Pattukottai, Negeswarar Sannidhi in Kumbakonam, Trichy

visualised as cow, Sripuram is its head, Himalayas its neck, Kedaram its belly, Benaras its back, Kanchi its hip and the chasm, Kamakoti Peedam, its navel.

Learning this from Lord Siva, the Devas came to Kanchi and remained there taking the form of parrots and prayed to Goddess Kamakshi for the redemption of their sufferings at the Hands of Bandakasura. Showing mercy on them, She took the frightful form of Bhairavi, like the fire of Deluge, with 18 arms and 18 celestial weapons, came out of the chasm, reached Kailas, where the asura was sleeping, kept one foot on his neck and the other on his breast, killed him and returned to Kanchi through Bilakasa with his head, holding his locks of hair, as a 5 year old girl. Seeing her ferocious form, the Devas swooned. To remove their fear, she then assumed a lovely form wearing silk garments and adorned with all ornaments. Recovering their consciousness and seeing Her dazzling form, the Devas remained spellbound unable to comprehend her amazing powers. She then directed them to bury the body of Bandakasura there and erect a victory-staff, called Jayasthambam, as a mark of victory.

While the Devas were digging the ground to bury his head, they found another Asura called Mallaka, performing penance beneath the earth, Sensing that he was invincible, they prayed to Lord Vishnu to kill him. Lord Vishnu attacked Mallaka but every drop of blood shed from his body was transformed into a demon in the same form and soon there was an army of demons to fight with Lord Vishnu. Each demon in the huge army so produced was killed by Vishnu in that battle, only to see more and more demons emerge from the spilt blood-drops. Unable to vanquish them, Lord Vishnu prayed to Lord Siva to come to His rescue. At once, Lord Siva unlocked His long matted hair and struck it on the ground to produce two ghosts which drank all the drops of blood preventing the multiplication of demons. Then Lord Vishnu was able to annihilate all the demons with their aid.

The ghosts, intoxicated by excessive drinking of blood began to attack Lord Vishnu Himself for whose assistance they were created. Lord Vishnu pushed them down and stood upon them, Showing resistance, they rose up. Again He pushed them down and sat upon them. Seeing them still resisting, He lay down upon their bodies and suppressed their arrogance. Hence His name "Bhootha Bandhana".

Coming back to their senses, the ghosts prayed Lord Vishnu, to pardon them. In turn Lord Vishnu also felt sorry for having been forced to inflict pain on the Bhoothas which were sent by Lord Siva to assist Him in His battle with Mallaka.

At this juncture, Lord Siva appeared on the scene, released Ganges from His matted hair, created a sacred tank called Pancha Theertham and asked Lord Vishnu and the ghosts to have their ablutions in it as atonement for their actions.

Lord Vishnu consecrated the male and female ghosts as guards for the Pancha Theertham and He Himself began to dwell in their midst at a higher plane in standing, sitting, and reposing postures in commemoration of His fight with them, and proclaimed that those who are desirous of having progeny, would cherish their desire by taking a holy dip in the Pancha Theertham. The Pancha Theertha tank is so constructed that the Abhishekha Theertham of Goddess Sri Kamakshi falls into this tank adding sanctity to the holy waters of this sacred tank.

In deference to the command of the Goddess Sri Kamakshi the Devas then buried Bandakasura, installed a Jayasthamba and constructed a passage from there leading to Bilakasa. They also constructed a mandapam with 24 pillars symbolising the 24 letters of the sacred hymn "Gayatri" and named it Gayatri Mandapam. They made an idol of the Goddess, resembling the form of which they were fortunate to have darshan and consecrated the same on a gembedecked throne symbolising the Pranava Mantra and worshipped Her with

great devotion. Then they closed the door, came out and spent that night chanting mantras in Her prayer. The next day, just before dawn, they opened the door in deep reverence to find to their great astonishment, Goddess Rajarajeswari in Her real form instead of that idol. It was on an auspicious Friday in the asterism Pooram in Krishna Pakhsa Prathama thidi in the month of Panguni in Srimukha Varsha in Kritheyuga in Savitri Swayambu Manavanthara that Rajarajeswara Sri Lalitha Thripurasundari manifested herself as Goddess Sri Kamakshi in Kamakottam of Kancheepuram.

To celebrate the coronation of Goddess Sri Kamakshi, in the Gayatri Mandapam in the Kamakottam of Kanchi, Viswakarma, the Chief architect of the Devas presented a palanquin, while Lord Brahma offered a hair clip made of Pearls, Lord Vishnu a crown studded with the nine gems, and Lord Siva a necklace called Sri Chakra. They decorated the idol of Sri Kamakshi with all ornaments, worshipped Her and prayed to Her to sanctify this shrine in Kanchi and continue to shower Her Grace on the devotees for all times to come.

ILLUSTRIOUS RECIPIENTS OF HER GRACE :

For annihilating Tarakasura, the Devas felt the pressing need for Lord Subramanya's incarnation as the son of Lord Siva. To distract Parameswara from His penance and divert His attention towards Goddess Gowri, the Devas deployed Cupid for the job. When Lord Siva was struck by his flower-arrows, His penance was disturbed. Getting angry, He burnt Cupid to ashes by the fire of the third eye on His forehead. Having lost his physical frame, Cupid not only wanted to regain it but also register a victory over Lord Siva. With these objectives, he prayed to Goddess Kamakshi and regained his lovely form. He expressed to Her, his desire to score a victory over Lord Siva. Assuring him of her full support, Sri Kamakshi directed Cupid to go to Kailash again and shower his flower-arrows on Lord Siva. He did so; but this time, the fire of Lord Siva's third eye, could do no harm to Cupid. Not only was it

unable to reduce him to ashes, but it began to shine like a gem on his head as an ornament.

Then Lord Siva, infatuated with love, went into the harem to meet Goddess Gowri but she was not found there. This was because Goddess Kamakshi had imbibed the powers of all manifestations of Sakthi in all the holy places throughout and remained as a single store-house of power in Kanchi to save Cupid. Greatly disappointed Lord Siva visited all places and sacred shrines for His consort Gowri but to no purpose. Finally He came to Kanchi where He saw Goddess Kamakshi, the very personification of grace and expressed His love for her mistaking Her to be the Gowri. But Goddess Kamakshi told Him that she was not His consort, Gowri to appease His love and asked Him to seek the assistance of cupid for the extinction of the fire of love from him.

Lord Siva took it as a prestige issue, rejected Her suggestion and was about to seize Her hand forcibly. But Goddess Kamakshi foiled His attempt by generating, just by Her looks a crore of cupids for attacking Him. Lord Siva in turn generated a crore of Rudras to fight with the cupids, but they were all defeated. Cupid, who emerged as a victor with the grace of the Goddess, made Lord Siva surrender into Her. Goddess Kamakshi then transformed these cupids into stars just above the Kamakoti Peetam and then, to facilitate the various manifestations of parasakthi so as to allow them to get back to their respective shrines as the consorts of Lord Siva in those forms.

Goddess Kamakshi in Kanchi is seen bearing a sugarcane-bow and five flower-arrows of red-lotus, Asoka Mango, Jasmine and Blue-lotus in Her arms. Jagadguru, His Holiness Sri Chandrasekarandra Saraswathi Swami of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam once pointed out that Goddess Kamakshi seized these weapons of the cupid so that he might not exercise his influence over Her devotees and the ganis.

Bandakasura and Cupid, endowed with Tamoguna and Rajoguna respectively, are personifications of anger and lust. Unfulfilled lust leads to anger and Desire is the root cause of misery. One should strive to overcome these two qualities. Though both anger and desire cannot be completely effaced, they can be kept under proper check without causing any hindrance to the practice of Dharma with the grace of Goddess Sri Kamakshi.

The three gunas namely Sathvaguna, Rajoguna and Thamoguna signify judicious action, indiscriminate action, and inaction respectively. By vanquishing Bandakasura and subduing Cupid, Goddess Sri Kamakshi demonstrated to the entire world the futility of inaction, the need for careful avoidance of indiscretion and the importance of inculcating judicious action.

As Sri Lalitha Turipusundari, the Parasakthi Herself has sanctified the Kamarakottam in Kanchi as the presiding Deity of Kancheepuram, and hence there is no separate sannidhi for Gowri the manifestation of Parasakthi in the temples of Siva in Kanchi. This is because the powers of the various manifestations of Parasakthi, who ought to find a place in these temples, are merged in Goddess Sri Kamakshi alone.

Once Lord Brahma desired to perform the Tiruhkalayanotsavam, of the Goddess Gowri with Sri Ekamreswara. To fulfill His desire, Sri Kamakshi generated from the eye of Her forehead a manifestation of Sakthi and directed Brahma to get a golden idol made in the form of that manifestation and perform the Kalyanotsavam of Sri Ekamreswara with that idol as His consort and Brahma acted accordingly.

To make the celebration of Tirukkalyanotsavam a regular feature, He took a lotus used for worshipping Goddess Kamakshi and threw it up in the sky. It blossomed, and came down to the earth taking a human form and stood before Him with folded hands. Brahma named him "Akasa Bhoopathy" and made him the ruler of Kanchi and directed him to look

after the worship of Goddess Kamakshi on the same lines. Akasa Bhoopathi, his son Thundeeran and his descendants continued the tradition of celebrating daily, fortnightly and monthly festivals and the Brahmotsavam in the prescribed manner.

There is a sanctum of Lord Vishnu called as 'Kalvar' within the inner prakara of the shrine of Sri Kamakshi in the Gayathri Mandapam. During the churning of the milky-ocean, Lord Vishnu with Svetavarna, bearing mountain the mandara on His back in the form of tortoise was oppressed by the scorching radiation of Halahala which darkened His body. The Devas offered the hand of Goddess Lakshmi in marriage to Lord Vishnu. Goddess Lakshmi, renowned for Her shining golden complexion, scoffed once at Vishnu saying for fun that He was no match for Her because of His dark complexion. Irritated by Her proud attitude caused by the thought of Her lovely complexion, Lord Vishnu cursed Her to lose Her beauty forthwith. This is an instance to show to the world that playfulness may turn to misery at times and that one should be cautious while talking to people even if they are very near and dear. Lakshmi was very much distressed at this and prayed to Goddess Sri Kamakshi to grace her with the lost beauty. Sri Kamakshi consoled her and asked her to remain to the left of Her sannidhi situated in Gayathri Mandapam of Kamakottam in Kancheepuram so that Her devotees would receive Her kumkuma prasadam and offer it to her and by its efficacy she would regain her lovely form. She asked Lakshmi that in return, she would bestow all prosperity upon the devotees. Goddess Lakshmi submitted to Her will and regained Her lovely form. Thus the Aroopa Lakshmi became Soundarya Lakshmi.

Lord Vishnu, also realised his mistake in cursing His consort Sri Lakshmi in haste and came to Kanchi to appease Her. He was delighted to see Her in Gayatri Mandapam, in Her original beauty. But He wanted to look at Lakshmi without being noticed by Her. Though He approached Her stealthily, she

took notice of Him. Bold of being under the shelter of Goddess Kamakshi she even ventured to call Vishnu who was stealing a look at Her as "Kalva" meaning 'a thief'. Hence Lord Vishnu, dwelling adjacent to Soundarya Lakshmi in Gayatri Mandapam, came to be called "Kalvar". Kalvar's sannidhi is one of the 108 Sri Vaishnavite shrines and Tirumangai Azhwar has sung in praise of this deity.

When Akasa Bhoopathy ruled over Kanchi, the city had once to face a severe drought and famine. The King under took a fast praying to Goddess Kamakshi to cause rains for cultivation, relieve his subjects from hunger and thirst and also blessing him with progeny. With Her grace, he got a son named Thundeera, who was Lord Vinayaka incarnate. There were also rains and the city of Kanchi turned prosperous. Filled with immense joy, the King arranged for mass-feeding. Goddess Kamakshi in the guise of a Sumangali - an old married lady - sat in the row and began to take food. Immediately there were showers of gold outside the pandal. While all were wondering how this happened, they were further amazed to hear the child, Thundeera, coming out with an explanation that while the queen, his mother, was herself winnowing the grains meant for the mass-feeding, a pearl of gold, getting detached from her golden ring got mixed with the food grains.

This golden pearl entered into the stomach of Goddess Kamakshi when she consumed the food in the guise of a sumangali and in token of Her gratification caused showers of gold in that region, the corns of paddy growing there also assumed a golden lustre. This place is now called "Pon Vilianda Kalathoor". King Thundeera spent his entire life in the service of Goddess Kamakshi. There is an image of King Thundeera in the temple of Sri Kamakshi seen with folded hands in deep meditation opposite to the sannidhi of the processional deity of Kamakshi. While circumambulating the mantap it is a custom of the devotees to keep silent and remain with folded hands as they pass by the idol as a mark of respect to King Thundeera.

Goddess Sri Kamakshi also blessed many devotees with erudition and poetic-talent from time to time, the most prominent among them being Sage Durvasa, Parasurama, Dhowmya, Adi Sankara and Mooka Sankara.

Shri Sankara attained Videha Makti in the sanctum sanctorum of Goddees Kamakshi. To commemorate this event, there is a sannidhi built for Sri Sankara in the Kamakshi Temple. The fact that Adi Sankara incorporated the name of Sri Kamakoti Peeta in the name of Sri Kanchi Mutt throws light on the in separate link between Goddess Sri Kamakshi and Sri Sankara Mutt. Sri Sankara not only coasecrated Sri Chakra. but also renovated the Kamakshi temple which itself is in the form of Sri Chakra. The ruler of Kanchi, Rajasena, under instructions from Adi Sankara, changed the modalities of town - planning so as to make the city itself resemble the form of Sri Chakra, with Kamakotta Garbagriha as its Bindu of pivotal point. Sankara then established the Sarvagna Peeta there and ascended the same.

The 20th Acharya in the Guru Parampara of His Holiness Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetadipathy Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya Swami, called Sri Mooka Sankara, composed 503 liting verses in praise of Goddess Kamakshi. The word 'Mooka' in Sanskrit means a mute. In his poorvasrama he was a dull mute. He used to come and sit in the sannidhi of Goddess Kamakshi every day. Another devotee, Sri Vidya Upasaka, also used to come there praying for scholarship and eloquence. One day Goddess Kamakshi intending to bless that devotee, appeared before him in the guise of a damsel and asked him to open his mouth. Not knowing Her identity, that devotee unfortunately drove Her away in anger. At that time, by a stroke of good fortune, the dumb bachelor, sitting by his side, opened his mouth fortuitously when Goddess Kamakshi transferred Her Tamboola Rasa into it. Immediately, he was transformed into a gifted poet who reeled off verses in praise of Goddess Kamakshi! The 62nd Acharya of Sri Kamakoti Peeta, His Holiness Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi

Swamigal, has composed a work called "Siva Geetha Malika" giving an account of the devine sports of Goddess Kamakshi and Lord Ekamreswara.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE :

The Temple has 4 big towers on the four sides, tall walled-enclosures and artistic sculptures. A peculiarity of this temple is that on crossing the walled-enclosure and entering the temple we are unable to identify the 4 directions !

On crossing the walled enclosure through the Rajagopuram We see the flag-staff and an altar. Opposite to the flag staff, there is a stone-window in the sannidhi Parkara. Looking through this, we can have darshan of Goddess Kamakshi in Gayatri Mandapam even from outside-Opposite to the flag-staff there is an idol of Sri Vinayaka renowned as a giver of boons, Crossing the door-way of the tower and going in we come across the Sukravara Mandapam where the processional idol of Goddess Kamakshi is brought every Friday. Sri Anjaneya in a captivating form is portrayed in one of the pillars of this mandapam.

When we go in through the main door-way after the Sukravara mandapam, we see a victory-staff called Jayasthambam. Going in through the entrance opposite to Jayasthamba and turning to the left we have darshan of Vigna Nivarana Ganapathi. Though the prakara is constructed circumambulating the sannidhi of Goddess Kamakshi, it is customary to circumambulate the Utsava Mandapam containing the processional - deity of Kamakshi, have dharshan at Saraswathi, Bangaru Kamakshi and Annapoorani and then reach the sannidhi of Goddess Kamakshi. Climbing up the steps leading to the Utsava Mandapam, we have dharshan of sage Durvasa.

The sage Atri and his wife Anasuya had three sons, the Moon, sage Dattatreya and sage Durvasa who were glorified with the characteristics of Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord

Siva respectively. All of them were devotees of Parasakthi the Divine Mother and were recipients of Her grace. The Moon-God got the rare privilege of adoring Her crown. Hence Her name Chandramowleeswari. The sage Dattatreya who devised a method for his personal worship guided the entire humanity to worship Her as the foremost in the Guru Parampara with a view to attain mental sublimity essential for an understanding of the doctrine of Advaita. For enabling mankind to worship Her according to Agama Sastras not only in private but in public and outlining the procedure for the same, the sage Durvasa wrote a treatise called Sowbagya Chintamani. Even today, the worship of Kamakshi is followed on the lines laid down by Durvasa. While circumambulating the Utsava Mandapam we see the Palliarai and the idol of Ishtasiddhi Vinayagar. Then we come to the Asthana mandapam containing the processional deity of Sri Kamakshi. Goddess Saraswati and Goddess Lakshmi, with chowries in their hands, are seen engaged in rendering Her fanning service. Standing in this mandapam, we can also have darshan of the presiding-deity of Kamakshi and Sri Chakra through a window. After worshipping the processional deity and continuing through the mandapam, we see Thundeera Maharaja with folded hands in one of the pillars. On the other side of this mandapam, there are sannidhis of Saraswati and Swarna Kamakshi. At their entrance to these sannidhis there are the idols of Sowbagya Ganapati and Lord Subramanya on either side. The Swarnalakshmi, also called Bangaru Kamakshi which was consecrated by Lord Brahma in Kanchi, was later taken to Thanjavur via Gingee, Udayarpalayam and Tiruvarur by the ancestors of Sri Syamasastri one among the Music Trinity, during an invasion by foreigners. This golden idol is now worshipped as Sri Bangaru Kamakshi at Thanjavur.

At the place where she once dwelt here, we now see a pedestal adorned with Her foot prints. Descending down the Utsava Mandapam, we have the sannidhi of Annapoorani, opposite to the entrance of the Moolasthanam.

In the Moolasthanam, Goddess Kamakshi is sanctifying the Gayatri Mandapam with 24 pillars signifying the 24 letters of Gayatri Mahamantra. While going to Her sannidhi, we see the Kalvar and Soundaryalakshmi. In the Moolasthanam Sri Vidya Lalitha Tripurasundari dwells as Goddess Kamakshi in the form of cosmic space and in penance performing posture. A third form of Her in the Moolasthanam is seen with four hands. The upper left and right hands are embellished by Pasa and Anhusa respectively. In the lower left and right hands, she has a sugarcane bow and flower-arrows respectively. Words will not be adequate to describe the captivating form of Sri Kamakshi. It is something to marvel at and the bliss it gives, is something to be experienced in person.

In front of Goddess Kamakshi, we see Sri Chakra consecrated by Sri Adi Sankara. Sri Chakra is the abode of Lalitha Tripurasundari who is also called 'Sri Vidya Swaroopini'. The word 'Sri' refers to Srividya and the word 'Chakra' refers to a wheel shaped device called yantra. In the word 'Sri Vidya', 'Sri' means Parasakthi and 'Vidya' means knowledge. Hence Sri Chakra is a device to get enlightened about Goddess Parasakthi. Worship of Sri Chakra is equivalent to the worship of Parasakthi. In Kamakshi temple, Archanas are performed only to this Sri Chakra. In the Kavacham surrounding Sri Chakra, Goddess Lakshmi dwells in Her eight forms called the 'Ashta Lakshmis'. It is customary for devotees to receive Kamakshi's kumkuma prasadam, offer it at the feet of Goddess 'Aroopa Lakshmi' remaining to the left of Sri Kamakshi in the walls of the Prakara of the Moolasthanam and then take the kumkumam from there to have it as thilakam on the forehead. Varahi and Santhana Ganapati are also seen in the Moolasthanam Prakara.

Coming out of the Gayatri Mandapam, we have darshan of Sri Sastha with His consorts Poorna and Pushkala. Adjoining to this sannidhi we have the sannidhi of Sri Adi Sankara. It is said that Adi Sankara ascended the Sarvagna Peeta here. In the mandapam, next to this sannidhi, we see pictures cut

on black marble slabs depicting the life-history of Sri Adi Sanka. Coming out we have darshan of Varasiddhi Vinayakar near the Jayasthambam. Then coming out of the temple, we see in the eastern tower, sannidhis of Bairavar and Durga. Circumambulating the Prakara, we come to Kasiviswanathar sannidhi, the sacred tank, Navarathri Mandapam. On its bank we see the Kanchi Vriksha which is the Sthala Viruksha. The outlet through which the sacred Abhisheka theertha of the Goddess fall into this sacred tank is known as "Karumari Poichal". It is here that we come across the sannidhi of Lord Vishnu in standing, sitting and reposing postures, a Yagna Mandapam and Yagasala.

It is worth mentioning that all the temples in Kanchi face the Kamakshi Amman temple. Whenever any festival is celebrated in these deities are taken out in procession round the Kamakshi temple.

FESTIVALS :

The Acharyas of Sri Kamakoti Peetam who are the hereditary trustees of Sri Kamakshi Ambal temple have renovated the temple whenever necessary. There are inscriptions which indicate that renovation was undertaken in 1761 at the instance of His Holiness Sri Chandra Sekharendra Saraswathi Swamigal of Sri Kamakoti Mutt. In 1942, His Holiness Sri Chandra Sekharendra Saraswati Swamigal the present Acharya, performed the Mahakumbabishekam of the temple and also got a silver car manufactured modelled after Sri Chakra and offered to the Goddess a golden Sahasranamamala, a garland of golden coins on which the one thousand names of the Goddess are inscribed. The Rajagopuram, constructed by Sri Krishna Devaraya was developed by Pallava Kings. Prakara Gopurams and Vimana were renovated and Mahakumbabishekam performed by His Holiness Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peeta Jagadguru Sri Jayendra Saraswati Swami on the 5th April 1976. In that connection, 75 music concerts were arranged spread over 48 days and a three-day Hindu Religious conference and a

Vidwat sadas were also held. The Vimana of Sri Kamakshi sannidhi was gold-plated and Kumbabishekam performed on 1st February sannidhi 1979 by His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Swami of Sri Kamakoti Peetam.

Every Friday, Special Abishekams are performed to Goddess Sri Kamakshi. The devotees throng the temple on Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays. On every full-moon day, Navavarana Pooja is performed. Brahmotsavam and Navarathri Festival are celebrated in the months of Masi and Purattasi respectively on a very grand scale. During Navarathri festival, the processional deity is brought to Navarathri Mandapam where music concerts are held for 9 days. During that period, special Poojas and Navavarana Pooja are performed. It is the personal experience of every devotee who visits the temple of Sri Kamakshi in Kanchi that he derives peace by getting his ambitions fulfilled by the devine grace of the Mother Goddess Sri Kamakshi.



THE TEMPLES OF SRI PACHAIVANNAR AND SRI PAVALAVANNAR

PURANIC ORIGIN :

It is said in the Puranas that, the Lord assumes different complexions in different Yugas. In Krithayuga, the people were endowed with Sattvaguna with a taste for white colour and so God assumed a form with Svethavarna, a milkywhite colour. In Tretayuga, He assumed a red colour like coral, called Pavalam in Tamil and Pravala in Sanskrit. Hence His name Pavalavannar or Pravala-vannar. In Dwaparayuga, He assumed a green colour like emerald and came to be called Pachaivannar, or Marakatha Vannar. In Kaliyuga. He prefers to remain in His natural blue complexion, Syamalavarana, because with deterioration in Bakthi and moral standards, people are not likely to be influenced whatever hue He assumes. It is said that Lord Vishnu gave darshan to the twin Aswin gods as Pavalavannar, in Kancheepuram.

Once the sages of Naimisaranya were performing a sacrifice for the welfare of mankind. At that time, the celestial sage, Narada, who visited the Place, suggested that they offer the fruits of their sacrifice to the one among the Trinity, namely Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, who excelled the other two in the possession of Sattvaguna as, according to Dharma any sacrifice with Nishkama Karma should be performed only in the name of God. Unable to decide for themselves, the Rishis debated Saint Bhrugu to come to a decision after testing the auspicious attributes of the Trinity.

When sage Bhrugu went to Satyaloka, the abode of Lord Brahma, He was engaged in a private conversation with His consort Saraswati and did not take cognizance of the sage's visit. Getting agitated, sage Bhrugu cursed Brahma that there would be no temple-worship for Him on the earth.

The sage then went to Mount Kailas where Lord Siva was in the company of His consort Parvati. He also did not notice the sage's visit. The Sage cursed Lord Siva that there would be no idol-worship for Him save in the form of Lingam.

Finally the sage went to Vaikunta where he saw Lord Vishnu in His yogic sleep reposing on Adishesha, His serpentcouch. Naturally He also did not welcome the sage. Feeling insulted by the cold reception, the sage got agitated and in his anger kicked Vishnu's breast with his foot. This at once awoke Sri Vishnu from His yogic sleep. Instead of showing a tendency to retaliate, Lord Vishnu arose calmly, enquired the sage compassionately whether his foot was hurt and then began to massage it gently. It was then that sage Bhrugu concluded that He is the mightiest of Gods who overpowers all by the most potent of all weapons, namely Sattva Guna, giving rise to kindness and compassion. The sage begged Sri Vishnu earnestly to excuse him for his rash conduct and suggest a remedy for the atonement of his sin. Lord Vishnu ordered Him to go to Kancheepuram and perform penance. Then sage Bhrugu returned to Naimisaranyam, told the sages all that had happened and helped them to complete the sacrifice. Then he came to Kanchi, had his ablution in Chakra

Theertham and began his penance. Pleased by that, Lord Vishnu gave him darshan as Pavalavannar in the same form as during his visit to Vaikuntam, sitting on the serpent-couch.

There is also another version about the Vishnu of Svetha-varna acquiring Pavalavanna. During the churning of the milky ocean, Lord Vishnu with Svetavarna bearing the mountain 'Meru' on his back, in the form of a tortoise, developed a green colour by the scorching radiation of the Poison Halahala. Then He annihilated the army of demons despatched by Saraswati to cause impediments to Brahma's sacrifice. In order to put an end to the growth of Asuras emerging from the blood drops shed by the fallen Asuras, Lord Vishnu had to consume the blood of the killed asuras and because of that acquired red colour or Pravalavarna.

DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION I

The temple of Pavalannar is in Big Kanchi near Kanchipuram Railway Station and Sri Kamakshi Ambal temple. The presiding deity dwells under Pravala Vimana facing west on the serpent-couch of the five-headed Adisesha in a sitting posture, keeping one foot bent majestically at a right angle upto His waist, with His celestial conch, wheel etc., and Abhayahastha Mudra. The idol of sage Bhurgh also finds a place inside the sannidhi. The consort of Sri Pavalavannar is worshipped here as 'Mother Paravavalli' and Her sannidhi is facing that of the Lord.

To the left of the main sanctum, We have the sannidhi of Sri Andal facing the perumal sannidhi with a Pavithrotsava Mantapam in front of it. Following there, we have the sannidhis of Nammalwar, Tirumangai Alwar and Srimad Ramanuja.

The temple of Sri Pravalavannar was formerly situated at a distance of 2 KM from the Present location in the area called Banapattarai. As it became dilapidated, this temple was constructed and the present idol was consecrated. There is a sacred tank called Chakra Theertham in front of the temple. Outside

Pavalavannar's sannidhi and inside the compound adjacent to the main tower we have the sannidhi of Sri Manavala Maamuni and a Vahana Mandapam.

On the fifth day of the Bramotsavam of Lord Varabaraja of Kanchi. He is decorated in the form of 'Mohini Avathara' and during the procession He visits the temple of Sri Pavalavannar where He is received with all the temple honours and Prasadam is distributed to all devotees at that time. Brahmotsavam is celebrated in this temple, on the asterism 'Anusham' in the month of Vaikasi.

At the end of Pavalavannar sannidhi street and just opposite to this temple, we have the temple of Sri Pachaivannar. The Street between these two temples is called Kalandar Street. The consort of Sri Pachaivannar is worshipped as a munificent giver of boons by the devotees with the sacred name 'Mother Marakathavalli' A number of devotees visit these temples every day to worship Sri Pachaivannar and Sri Pavalavannar and get their desires accomplished



THE TEMPLE OF VAIKUNDA PERUMAL

PURANIC ORIGIN :

The enjoyment of Supreme Bliss arises from pondering over the Lord's resplendent form chanting His holy names, extolling His auspicious attributes, singing hymns in praise of His glory, having darshan of His Archavatara Moorthis, conversing with like-minded devotees about the sanctity of His shrines, constructing temples and undertaking renovative works in them. The famous Pallava King Nandivarman also called Mallayarkon wanted to worship Lord Vishnu as an Archavatara Moorthy in the same form as in Vaikuntam and constructed a temple for Sri Vaikuntanadha in Kancheepuram and this temple is sung by Alwars and "Parameswara Vinnagaram".

The Pallava King Mallayarkon labouring under a curse, got released from it by the grace of Sri Vaikunta Perumal. By His grace, he also begot a son. As a token of his gratitude, he constructed this temple to enable all devotees to dip into the sea of His grace. Tirumangai Azhwar, who has sung in praise of this deity, has also referred to this Pallava King in his pasurams.

jeevanmuktha who has attained the state of mind which enables him to ettricate himself from the harmful influence of the feeling of 'I' and 'Mine' and is thus enabled to free himself from egoism and attachment and get released from the net of illusion or Maya. The guidance of a guru or Preceptor, who is in the state of Jeevanmuktha, is essential for a spiritual aspirant to be in the right path. The most important teaching of the Vedha is the oneness of the Supreme-Being, called Brahman, whose three characteristics are Sat (eternally existing entity), Chit (True Knowledge) and Ananda (Bliss). Hence the form of Brahman is frequently described as "Sachithananda".

Our scriptures enunciate a number of great propositions callad Mahavakyas. One of them is "Tat Tvam Asi". The word 'Tat' refers to the immanent Supreme-Being without any limiting characteristics such as form, colour etc. Further the very definition 'Tat' as an eternal entity leads to the logical conclusion that it should be unique without a second one. The other words 'Tat' refers to Pramatma also called Nirguna Brahman.

When we say that the Superme-Being is immanent, it goes without saying that all living-beings, called Jeevatmas are only immanifestations of the Paramatma. The word, "Tvam" refers to the Jeevatma. So the import of the Mahavakya is "That Thou Art" or in other words "You are yourself the Paramatma". There is no distinction between Jeevatma and Paramatma as between a water bubble and water. The former owes its origin to temporary survival, dissolution and final union with water itself. In the same way, Jeevatma and Paramatma are inter-related. The basic postulate of Advaita Philosophy is 'Brahma satyam Jagath Midya' which means "Brahman alone is real and eternal while the universe is illusory". But the influence of Maya or illusion, giving rise to ignorance, creates a misconception that Jeevatma is different from Paramatma. As a result, one begins to identify his body and the world as something real. This leads to egoism, feelings of 'I' and 'Mine', indul-

gence in worldly actions with a view to attain their fruition and get subjected to bondage which results in a cycle of births and deaths, called "Janana Marana Valaya" with fruits of actions which result in a cycle of births and deaths without liberation.

On the other hand, a person initiated into the right path by a guru, gets the realisation "Aham Brahmasmi" meaning "I am Paramatma myself". Such an Atmagnani overcomes the influence of Maya, realises the temporal nature of worldly things; controls the mind and sensory organs by spiritual exercises, checks anger and lust, looks upon others as his own self, performs all actions without expecting any fruit, becomes free from bondage of fruits of actions and secures liberation.

The spiritual guides preach and practise Dharma and by their righteous conduct set an example to all generations, to follow in their foot-steps. They are thus responsible for the evolution and sustenance of an ordered society. Sri Adi Sankara is one among such Gurus or Acharyas who stayed in Kancheepuram.

Whenever there is social decadence and anarchy, God steps in to re-establish righteousness. There arose an occasion centuries ago, when there was almost a complete spiritual bankruptcy. People began to forget vedic injunctions. Hindu tenets were attacked and as many as 72 sects raised their banners. It is believed that Lord Siva Himself incarnated as Sri Adi Sankara then to stem the crisis and to restore Hinduism to its high position.

Even before the advent of Sri Sankara, there were many Acharyas who taught the doctrine of Advaita, notable among them being Brahmanandi, Dravidacharyar, Saint Patanjali, Gowdapadacharya and Sri Govinda Bhagavatpadacharya. Still it was Adi Sankara who popularised it far and wide so much that he has come to be reckoned as the founder of Advaita Philosophy.

SRI SANKARA'S LIFE AND ACHIEVEMENTS :

Sri Sankara, was born in the sacred village of 'Kaladi' in Kerala. His mother was Aryamba and his father Sivaguru. The purpose of his incarnation was to stabilise the vedic religion.

At the tender age of five, he began his vedic studies. Even while young, he had mastered the vedas, vedanta, puranas, epics and kavyas to become an eminent scholar. While in his gurukula, according to the custom in vogue, he used to go round seeking biksha. Once on an auspicious Dwadasi day, he went to a house of a poor Brahmin. Seeing the boy Sankara at the door-step and finding nothing available to be given to him, the poor woman searched her house thoroughly and found just two berries kept by her husband for breaking the Ekadasi-fast on that day. With tears rolling down her cheeks, she put her share of just one berry into his alms-bowl and went inside the house ashamed at her inability to do something more. Sankara, deeply moved by her generosity even in abject penury, extolled Goddess Mahalakshmi to shower Her grace on that poor house. In response to his prayers, there was a heavy shower of golden berries in their house immediately. The collection of slokas rendered by Sri Sankara then in praise of Goddess Sri Mahalakshmi came to be called as 'Kanakadhara Sthothram'.

On return from the Gurukulam, Sri Sankara managed to get the permission of his mother to become a sanyasi and left Kaladi. He trod the entire distance from there upto the banks of the river Narmada where he met Sri Govinda Bhagavatpadacharya doing penance in a cave. Seeing the lad's dispassionate nature (Vairagya), Sri Govindabhagavatpadacharya initiated Sri Sankara into sanyasa and taught him the import of the Mahavakyas and the doctrine of Advaita contained in Vedas, Upanishads, Brahmasutra and Bhagavat Gita.

Adi Sankara wrote his elaborate commentaries for Brahma Sutra, Isa, Kena, Kata Munda, Mandookya, Taithireeya,

Chandokya and Brihadaranyaka Upanishads, Bhagavat Gita, Vishnu Sahasranama Stotra and Lalita Trisati. To enable readers to follow their import, he wrote 35 explanatory works, called Prakaranas of which Vivekachoodamani, Atmabhodam Praboda Sudhakaram and Satasloki are noteworthy. Realising that worship of the formless abstract viz., Nirguna Brahman is difficult for laymen, he also advocated the worship of Saguna Brahman. He is the founder of Shanmathas', the six schools of religion advocating worship of Siva, Vishnu, Sakti, Kumara (Subramanya), Ganapati and Soorya. These are called Saivam, Vaishnavam, Saktam, Kaumaram, Ganapatyam and Sowram. He also composed as many as 67 stotras in praise of these deities to facilitate recitation by way of worship by the common man to develop devotion towards the Almighty which would kindle the thirst to know the Supreme. Sivanandalahari, Sowndaryalahari, Anandalahari, Dakshinamoorthy Stotram, Bhajagovindam etc., are among them.

In Bhajagovindam, he commends the association of fully-evolved souls for developing a dispassionate nature and mental equanimity free of tribulations and desires.

He traversed throughout India preaching Advaita and came to Kanchipuram, where he consecrated Goddess Kamakshi in Sri Chakra Peetam and worshipped Her. Of the five crystal-Lingas brought by him from Kailasa, he kept the Yogalingam for his private worship. He later installed it in Sri Kamakoti Peetam of Kanchi with the name Sri Chandra Mouleswara. It was in Kanchi that Sri Adi Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya celebrated the "Sarvagna Peetarohanam."

The lineage of disciples who took over the reins of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam in succession after him came to be called in general as "His Holiness Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetadhipathi Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya Swami". Their Sanyasa Asrama names are embellished by the ending "Indra Saraswati". These Acharyas continue in the tradition of Sri Sankara worshipping Sri Chandra Mouleswara and Goddess

Kamakshi for the welfare of mankind. Among the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetadhipathis, who adorned this mutt, Sri Mooka Sankara is well-known as the author of "Mooka Panchasati", a collection of 500 verses in praise of Goddess Kamakshi, whose grace transformed the author, an innate dumb person, into an illustrious poet.

Their Holiness Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peedam Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya Guru Parampara.

1	Sri Sankara Bhagavad Padacharya	
2	„ Mandana Misra (Sri Sureswaracharya)	
3	„ Sarvagnathmendra	Saraswati
4	„ Satya Bodhendra	„
5	„ Gnananandendra	„
6	„ Suddhanandendra	„
7	„ Anantanandendra	„
8	„ Kaivalyanandendra	„
9	„ Kripa Sankarendra	„
10	„ Sureswarendra	„
11	„ Sivananda Chit Ganendra	„
12	„ Chandra Sekharendra	„ I
13	„ Sat Chit Ganendra	„
14	„ Vidya Ganendra	„ I
15	„ Geesppati Gangadharendra	„
16	„ Ujvala Sankarendra	„
17	„ (Balaguru) Sadasivendra	„
18	„ (Yogi Tilaka) Surendra	„
19	„ Marthanda Vidya Ganendra	„
20	„ Sri Mooka Sankarendra	„
21	„ Saravabhowma Chandrasekarendra	„
22	„ Paripoorna Bodendra	„
23	„ Sat Chit Surendra	„
24	„ Chit Sukendra	„
25	„ Sachidananda Ganendra	„
26	„ Pragna Ganendra	„
27	„ Chitvilasendra	„
28	„ Mahadevendra	„ I

29	Sri Poorna Bhodendra	Saraswati -I
30	" Bhodendra	Saraswati
31	" (Seelanidhi) Brahmananda Ganendra	"
32	" Chitananda Ganendra	"
33	" Sachidanandendra	"
34	" Chandrasekharendra	" II
35	" (Bahuroopa) Chitsukendra	"
36	" Chit Sukanandendra	"
37	" Vidya Ganendra	" II
38	" Dheera Abhinava Sankarendra	"
39	" Satchit Vilasendra	"
40	" Sobana Maha Devendra	"
41	" Gangadharendra	"
42	" Brahmananda Ganendra	"
43	" Ananda Ganendra	"
44	" Poorna Bodhendra	" II
45	" Paramasivendra	"
46	" Sandrananda Bhodendra	"
47	" Chandra Sekharendra	" III
48	" Chitvilasa Advaitananda Bhodendra	"
49	" Maha Devendra	" III
50	" Chandra Choodendra	" I
51	" Vidya Theerthendra	"
52	" Sankaranandendra	"
53	" Poornanda Sadasivendra	"
54	" Vyasachala Maha Devendra	"
55	" Chandra Choodendra	" II
56	" Sarvagna Sadasiva Bhodendra	"
57	" Paramasivendra	" II
58	" Viswadhika Atma Bhodendra	"
59	" Bhagavannama Bhodhendra	"
60	" Advaitatma Prakasendra	"
61	" Mahadevendra	" III
62	" Chandrasekarendra	" IV
63	" Maha Devendra	" IV
64	" Chandra Sekarendra	" V
65	" Sudarsana Mahadevendra	"

66	Sri Chandra Sekarendra	Saraswati-VI
67	„ Maha Devendra	Saraswati-V
68	„ Chandra Sekarendra	„ VII
69	„ Jayendra	„
70	„ Sankara Vijayendra	„

The Role of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt in consolidating the Hindu Religion is remarkable. At present, we are fortunate to have the blessings of the 68th Acharya, His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Chandra Sekharendra Saraswathi Swamigal and the 69th Acharya, His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Swamigal who are spreading the message of Sankara among us. Institutions and Associations such as Sri Sankara Baktha Jana Sabha, Hindu Samaya Mandram, Hindu Tamil poets' Mandram, Hindu Tamil writers' Mandram, Bharatiyar Mandram, Sri Pachaivannar Pavalavannar Baktha Jana Sabha etc., are being run in Kanchipuram with their blessings. The Mutt is running Veda Patasalas in Kanchi and some other places. In Kumbakonam, a Veda Dharma Paripalana Sabha, has been established and on its behalf, conferences are held through out the nation. Sri Adi Sankara Advaita Research Institute in Madras has been established to take up the task of publication of Sri Adi Sankara's works.

A Kannikadana trust has been formed to help poor families to celebrate marriages according to sastraic guidelines by providing them new clothes and Tirumangalyam. They also advise the people to desist from demanding dowry.

His Holiness has advised people to save a handful of rice daily and handover the collections to temples needing resources to help them prepare food, offer as Nivedanam to the dieties and then feed the poor. This scheme has received a great deal of public support. Similarly Kshetra Paripalana Sangam is providing assistance to temples lacking in resources to meet the expenses for lighting lamps twice a day and preparing Nivedanams. Arrangements have also been made in selected centres to provide free medical aid through Hindu Mission Hospitals.

To bring about the unification of Hindus the world over and spread the teachings of the Hindu religion. His Holiness Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Swamigal convened a World Hindu Conference in 1976. With His blessings, a college for Hindu Dharma has been started in Gejjal Naickenpatti in Salem under the auspices of Geeta Charitable Trust and an Ayurvedic College in Coimbatore. In Kanchi and Madras, Gosalas have been formed to take care of old and unyielding cows and save them from being cruelly sent to slaughter houses. In Kalahasti, a rehabilitation home for those aged above 60 years has been started. They are provided with shelter and free board with facilities for anushtana or prayer.

Sri Kamakshi Ambal Devasthanam in Kanchi, Sri Bangaru Kamakshi Ambal Devasthanam in Tanjore, Sri Panchamukheswarar Temple in Tiruvanaikoil and Sri Viswanatha Swami Devasthanam in Tiruvidaimarudur, are under the direct control of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam. The temples of Sri Sankara Matha in Haridwar and Sri Adi Sankara, Jayadeva and Chaitanya in Puri and Sri Adi Sankarar Mandapam in Nepal, Rishikesh, Kurukshetra, Badrinath and Tirupati, Mandapams containing Adi Sankara's holi sandals in Kanyakumari and Trivandrum, the house where Thirugnana Sambandar was born now serving as his memorial in Sirgazhi and Sri Adi Sankarar's Keerti Sthambam in his birth-place Kaladi are also maintained by Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam. Tiruppavai-Tiruvempavai conferences and Religious Training classes are also held under the auspices of the Mutt to foster the Hindu religion.

Let us pay our humble obeisance to the Lotus feet of their Holiness and get their blessings in our pursuit for True knowledge and Bliss.

